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The American University in Cairo  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**INVISIBLE PRODUCERS IN THE ECONOMY: THE CASE OF  
DOMESTIC WORKERS IN EGYPT**

*Political Science Department*

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

by

*Noha Saad Zaghloul*

May/2014

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aims to explore the multidimensional problem of Domestic Workers in Egypt. Domestic Workers in Egypt lack the necessary legal protection, which in turn reflects on the absence of all forms of social protection for them and their families. In addition, the social stigma associated with the profession contributes to the violations against the workers of this sector who are mostly women coming mainly from low-socio economic backgrounds. This research focuses on women Domestic Workers, who live in slum communities in Cairo, many of whom are rural-urban migrants. It explores their challenges and their survival techniques used to face daily routines of going to work, commuting and supporting their families under those living and working conditions. The women domestic workers interviewed in this research are not a representative sample; however, they do reflect real life experiences of many other domestic workers who go through the same paths of life. On the other hand, interviews conducted with professionals working in the area of human rights, gender and development have also added to the researcher's knowledge of how the issue is perceived at the political and social levels. The research findings confirm that there are serious issues with how Domestic Workers are dealt with on the different legal and social levels, and it is a reflection of the overall lack of state protection to women's and workers' rights in Egypt. The research concludes with suggested mechanisms through which situation could improve; mainly through conduction of more research to know the size of the problem of Domestic Workers in Egypt. On the other hand, Domestic Workers' organization would be an essential step to establish a strong institutional body/mechanism that would advocate for Domestic Workers rights through the different channels.*

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*“While unpaid care work contributes to individual and house hold well-being, social development and economic growth, it often goes unrecognized and undervalued by policymakers. It is not visible in data that informs policymaking. Neither is the fact that its costs and burdens are unequally born across gender and class groupings.”*

*UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, October 2013.*

#### **Background**

Despite the policy attention and resources given to address gender gaps globally in sectors such as education, health, wages and labour rights, “women are still overrepresented among the underpaid and unprotected workers around the world” (*Antonopoulos, ILO Publications, 2009, 1*). “Care work” is perceived to be done out of the sense of obligation to others’ well being, however, it is also recognized to be part of the patriarchal structures that interact with the rest of the economy. The gender segregation of labour that confines women’s role to the home as the caregivers has consequences on women’s labour conditions including Domestic Work done in others’ homes, and this is because Domestic Work is a continuum of Care Work and thus is seen as an extension of the “natural” work of women. It is important to highlight that Unpaid Care Work is the umbrella under which Domestic Work takes place, and both of their contributions are invisible to the economy in this sense.

Furthermore, the non-recognition of the home as a work place is a critical factor for the devaluation and invisibility of Domestic Work. Being outside the legal protection of the state,



Domestic Workers are to be visible only through organizing themselves to achieve their rights. Gender, Domestic Work and organization are three correlated factors that affect each other in different ways. Furthermore, to be able to address the issue of the domestic labour sector, there is a need to have a better understanding of Domestic Workers' experiences.

The relation between gender and Domestic Work has been addressed by feminists and gender equality social scientists such as; Annie Phizacklea and Carol Wolkwitz (1995), Diane Elson (1998), Anderson B. (2001) and Katherine Kaufka (2003). On the other hand, the efforts to understand what is it like to live as a Domestic Worker and the benefits of organization for this sector, studies of the Kenyan and Brazilian experiences have provided a good example for the way gender, domestic labour, and organization interlink. In this research, the researcher attempts to show experiences of Domestic Workers living in Cairo, only to confirm the link between gender, domestic labour, and organization. Domestic Work of the contemporary Egypt "has been associated with migrants whether internal (rural-urban) or international migrants (coming from other countries)" (Ahmed, 2003, 8). This research will focus on rural-urban migrant female Domestic Workers living in slum communities on the outskirts of Cairo. Being a large urban setting, Cairo is a refuge to many rural women who migrated from rural areas, seeking to increase their income for themselves and their families, or it can rather be considered their only survival strategy.

### **Invisible Contribution of Domestic Work in Conventional Economics**

Diane Elson (1998) emphasizes that the shortcomings of current economic theories lie in the fact that they focus on the economic and the political with "no sign of an interest in the domestic, in the ways that households are organized (or disorganized) both internally and in relation to economic and political structures" (Elson, 1998, 1). Furthermore, she states, "the invisibility of domestic

structures in a body of knowledge is always disabling to struggles for women's rights and for equality between men and women" (Elson, 1998, 1). Elson states that the "home is depicted as the private sphere, while the factory or office, the meeting of the tenants' association or trade union, and the polling booth are all part of the public sphere" (Elson, 1998, 4). Annie Phizacklea and Carol Wolkwitz (1995) state that the "home is not a gender-neutral category but is filled with gender meanings" (Annie Phizacklea and Carol Wolkwitz, 15). In that sense it is perfectly normal that women would stay at home and take care of their children, and when they want to make money it becomes "less normal". This is because as Phizacklea and Wolkwitz put it "home is not the place of work and therefore home workers jobs are not treated as '*real jobs*'" (Phizacklea & Wolkwitz 1995, 23). This theoretical analysis is reflected very much in the way Domestic Workers are treated (which will be shown in detail later in this research), the different kinds of abuses that Domestic Workers suffer from, from low or no pay at all, stigma, sexual harassment, physical abuses and inferior look from society are attributed to the fact that they are not considered to be doing a "*real job*".

Katherine Kaufka (2003) explains how the rise of industrial capitalism in the early nineteenth century created new gender division of labor, where it confined women to reproduction and home maintenance tasks. "This new family standard excluded women from economic productivity and limited their acceptable role to the private sphere, and in turn, women's contributions within the private sphere of the home became invisible to the world outside of the family unit" (Kaufka, 2003, 2). This meant that for work to be economically valued, it had to be only through the marketplace. Thus, the invisibility of the household as a unit of production in conventional economics automatically results in devaluation of all domestic based activities including paid Domestic Work. On the other hand, with the changing role of women in the post-industrial, for many reasons mainly

the war, more women were accessing the workforce; however, caretaking and house chores were, and still are considered the responsibility of women. With more women accessing the labour force, there was not a parallel movement that encouraged men to assist in household work, thus, women had a double burden; working and taking care of the household. In addition, “since housewives have traditionally provided domestic care for free, such work has been seen not as “legitimate” employment, but as having little or no economic value” (Kaufka, 2003, 3).

With more women participating in the “legitimate” economy, they found themselves confronted with many challenges concerning taking care of their household and children, and performing well at their jobs and the solution was to hire domestic help. “The solution for many middle and upper-class households has been to hire domestic help” (Kaufka, 2003, 3). Anderson (2001) argues that managing a Domestic Worker openly “is more attractive option for women than attempting to manage men covertly” (Anderson, 2001, 29). With at least *53 million* Domestic Workers across the globe according to ILO 2010 Statistics (ILO 2013a, VI), Domestic Workers remain largely marginalized from states’ policies, particularly in developing countries. According to ILO 2013 Report “Domestic Workers across the world: Global and regional statistics and the extent of legal protection” despite the fact that Domestic Work does represent a large share of global wage employment, “Domestic Workers remain to a large extent excluded from the scope of labour laws and hence from legal protection enjoyed by other workers” (ILO, 2013a, VI).

The uniqueness of this sector’s working environment: private setting of the household, workload, low and inconsistent wages, and lack of social security, emotional and physical abuses, child labour and trafficking, has made it more difficult to mainstream Domestic Workers with other kinds of

workers. However, this should not be used as an excuse for their exclusion, but rather finding the most suitable policies that would ensure their protection and equal treatment taking into consideration the specificities of the profession.

## **Research Topic**

This research aims to explore the multi-dimensional problem of Domestic Workers in Egypt (Legal, Social and Economic). It will seek to discover the underlying causes of why Domestic Workers have been excluded from state protection and the consequences of this exclusion on Domestic Workers and their employers. In addition, the research will attempt to reveal the disparity between state approach to Domestic Work and reality on the ground and the impact that state policy or lack of policy has on Domestic Workers. Despite the unstable political environment, the researcher also hope to reveal the ongoing efforts of some organized Domestic Workers and NGOs who are working on mobilizing Domestic Workers and having unified collective demands in order to obtain their rights like any other worker in Egypt. The research aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the root-causes for the exclusion of Domestic Workers from state protection?
- What are the consequences of this exclusion?
- How do Domestic Workers cope with such unprotected working environment? And how does this affect their family and children?
- What is the role of the Media in addressing this problem?
- How much effort is being put to support Domestic Workers achieve their rights? And who are the stakeholders involved?

- What are the best practices for protection of Domestic Workers that can be applied to the Egyptian context?

### **Definition of Domestic Work**

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) defines Domestic Work as involving a range of tasks, including "cooking, cleaning the house, washing and ironing the laundry, general housework, looking after children, the elderly or persons with disabilities, as well as maintaining the garden, guarding the house premises, and driving the family car" (C189 and R2011 at a Glance, ILO, 2011, 7). For the purpose of this research, Domestic Work shall be defined as: household chores done by women from outside the family unit that include cleaning the house and clothes, cooking, ironing, and might include as well taking care of the elderly and/or children. Workers working in the field of Domestic Work shall be defined herein as "Domestic Workers". Domestic Workers may be classified into three categories; workers that reside inside the household (live-ins), casual workers (work for several homes), and the relatively fixed Domestic Workers (their work is restricted to one family and are paid monthly). The profile of female working as Domestic Workers is of great importance of how the profession is being perceived by the society and given attention by policy makers. In addition, how the Domestic Workers perceive themselves is also of relevance to how they are treated, the level of empowerment and skills such workers have often determine their pathway in this profession. Domestic Work presents a challenge "both personal and political-for women and men throughout the world, whether they are Domestic Workers or employers" (Anderson, 2001, 25).

## **Domestic Workers in Cairo: an overview**

Domestic Workers in Cairo could be classified into two categories: rural-urban migrant low-status women and foreign Domestic Workers, who are mostly refugees from neighboring African countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea (Ahmed, 2003, 12). An interesting classification from Zohry (2002, 4-6), which classifies Egyptian rural-urban migration to pre-Nasser's era and Post-Nasser's era, with the post-Nasser's era witnessing profound changes in the socio-economic conditions of Egypt and increasing rural-urban migration. With the large-scale industrialization that stimulated rural-urban migration of unskilled labour, and the expansion of the middle-class due to the vast expansion of education, increase in the demand of domestic services came along in this package. Nowadays, poverty is one of the driving factors of rural-urban migration, poor families migrate to the city to find income generating opportunities, they settle in slum communities in informal settings at the outskirts of Cairo. They usually have very few options of generating income, the men usually become casual workers in (construction, plumbing etc.) and the women join the Domestic Work sector due to its absorption capacity to the uneducated and the low skilled. At many instances, and due to the high rates of unemployment, female Domestic Workers are the sole providers of their families, the women are either widowed, divorced or married unemployed men. With this reverse of the traditional gender roles, and having the women as the breadwinners of families, they are still treated as the vulnerable, inferior, with the men having the upper hand inside the home, many of whom take the money of the women for themselves to consume it in leisure activities as will be further illustrated hereinafter.

Domestic Workers in Egypt are outside the legal protection of the state, Law no. 12 of 2003, promulgating the Egyptian labour law and executive regulations (the Labour Law) explicitly excludes

Domestic Workers from its articles. Article 4 of the Labour Law, stipulates its provisions shall not apply to: 1) public servants employed by State agencies, public establishments and local authorities; 2) *Domestic Workers and the like*; and 3) employer's family members whom the employer is in charge of" (Labour Law-Article 4, GOE Portal). The consequence of this exclusion is that Domestic Workers are not able to have social and medical insurances, they cannot have a pension; their capital is their physical strength, once sick or aged...their career and source of income ends with no compensation.

Domestic Work receives an extremely negative look from society, in the Egyptian culture; to call someone a "*maid*" is to degrade his/her status. This has to do with the perception of a maid in the culture, being poor, uneducated, unclean, and vulgar. The contribution of the negative view of women that the Egyptian media does...is multiplied when it comes to Domestic Workers. The Domestic Worker is mostly shown as a vulnerable person, a thief, often having an affair with any of the male members inside the household, or simply subject to abuse and/or harassment. Although the media is based on some truths coming from the society, the media tend to show the negative side of being a Domestic Worker, it does not highlight the positive role of the Domestic Worker who practically raises the children in the family and is a constructive part of the society whom without their help wives and mothers will not be able to participate in formal job market.

Domestic Workers are also subject to crimes of trafficking, especially among minor and children, who are often being trafficked into this profession by brokers in their villages. For example, a significant yet unknown number of Girls coming from specific rural areas, such as El-Beheira Governorate of Egypt, are sent to "house-service providers offices" from their youngest ages (starting

at the age of seven), and then sent to permanently work as domestic services providers, or 'housemaids/nannies' (i.e. Domestic Workers), in urban houses whose owners choose young girls as they cost less than adults. The foregoing practice is considered a form of trafficking as such girls are forced into without their consent. “Even though trafficking includes an element of movement, the crucial aspect of identifying it is not the movement or the site of work per se but the brokering, lack of consent and especially the exploitative conditions of work” (Antislavery International, 2006, 16-17). This is particularly important as to see how Domestic Workers are introduced and often trafficked by their own families and networks to remain in this profession for mostly all their lives.

### **Value of Collective Action for the Domestic Work Sector: Acting as ONE**

Collective action theory has been traditionally defined as “any action aiming to improve the group’s conditions (such as status or power), which is enacted by a representative of the group” (Wright, S.C, 1990, 994-996). Collective action has been significant in its effect to define wages of some sectors of workers. “Characteristics of the typical worker (including gender, ethnicity, caste, age and geographical origin), where the work is done, the level of formality or informality of employment, and the ease of *organizing and presenting collective demands* influence wages” (Domestic Work Policy Brief, ILO, 2011, 2). This is a highly critical point for this research as where *collective action* among Domestic Workers exists; there has been a proved change in their status. In the United States, after a long history of exclusion and exploitation, in June, 2007, more than 50 Domestic Workers from Bangladesh, the Philippines, Barbados, Haiti, Mexico, El Salvador, and other countries of the Global South, now working in U.S. cities came together at the United States Social Forum (USSF) for a National Domestic Workers Gathering. Their objective was to attract public attention to Domestic Workers and their particular set of problems, to consolidate the voice of



Domestic Workers and to bring respect and recognition to the work force (*Cristina and Poo, 2008, 4*). This action was the reason for passing “Domestic Worker Bill of Rights that ought to establish labor standards including a living wage, health care and basic benefits” (*Cristina and Poo, 2008, 4*). This example shows that macroeconomic policies of the states will remain its negligence of unorganized workers like the Domestic Workers until mobilization and collective action takes place and that is when states begin to recognize and bring about change to the status of the workforce. Collective action is a much stronger tool than organization as it

The emergence of rights movements and unions that call for Domestic Workers rights have been the most effective in gaining policy attention and reaching positive action. The tools used by unions to advocate for Domestic Workers rights have proven to be crucial to achieving equality for Domestic Workers. The experience of Kenya shows that when it is not humanly possible to conduct Labour inspection enforcement and implement Domestic Workers rights household-by-household “Domestic Workers themselves had to become organized in order to facilitate their own *empowerment*” (*Organizing Domestic Workers in Kenya, 2012, 12*). Awareness, training, advocacy, media campaigns, and mobilization have been proven to be the tools to the success for achieving to a great extent ways of legal protection for Domestic Workers.

It is important to note that collective action is key factor in promoting the visibility of Domestic Workers’ contribution to the economy and society. Collective action is intended to pressure the inclusion of Domestic Workers on the map of policy makers and eventually getting acknowledgement of their crucial contribution to millions of homes around the globe.

In this context, the hypothesis of this thesis is: *Collective action by Domestic Workers, supported by post-revolution feminist and political organizations will lead to their recognition and improvement of their working conditions through equitable and gender sensitive public policies.*

## **Methodology**

To present a holistic picture about the issue, there was a need for presenting information that takes into account all possible aspects. The research included three methods of research: secondary research, qualitative research and participant observation. The secondary research depends on available scholarly writings on the topic including global trends and country practices, as well as, newspapers articles and officials' statements. The other source of information is first hand data collection from Domestic Workers, employers of Domestic Workers, activists, women leaders of NGOs, professionals working in development, gender experts, political parties' members and social workers in NGOs.

### Description of Data collection

#### A. Secondary resources:

The secondary resources for the research depend on literary review of existing work on Domestic Workers; the critique made to capitalist division of labour and its implication on the women's positioning in society and how this contributes to the invisibility of Domestic Work. The secondary research also included a review of the historical evolution of the Domestic Work and the current global trends and international practices. Review of country experience with similar contexts to Egypt is also part of the resources to see what can be applied to Egypt and how. Review of existing handbooks on policy formulation from ILO and other international organizations' manuals was also used for this research.

## B. Empirical Research (Primary Data):

The tools used to conduct this qualitative research was mainly focus groups with Domestic Workers living in slum areas in Cairo and Helwan, as well as, in-depth interviews with Domestic Workers, activists, professionals working in the area of development, women leaders of NGOs. Qualitative research might not provide the *statistical* results that can be used to generalize an issue on a large population, however, “Qualitative methods explore the reasons and motivations for perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors of people and can produce a better understanding of the lived experiences of people” (Donley, 2012, 39). Qualitative research can “illuminate the social world in a way that quantitative data do not” (Donley, 2012, 39)

### *Focus Group Discussions*

Selection of the Domestic Workers who participated in the focus group discussion was totally random and depended on the availability of the Domestic Workers. The process went as follows; through personal contacts, the researcher had the knowledge that two NGOs namely, Al Shehab Foundation for Comprehensive Development and the Egyptian Association for Economic and Social Rights (EAESR) had capacity building programmes done with Domestic Workers who are members of the newly established NGO “Helpers”, based on that the researcher contacted the two NGOs and scheduled the days and timing of the focus groups. The total number of focus groups are 3, each including 5-9 Domestic Workers (age 18-60 years old), 2 were conducted in Ezbet el Hagganna, the other one was conducted in Helwan making the total number of participants in the focus groups 21 women Domestic Workers.

### *Interviews*

Selection of the Domestic Workers interviewees was during the focus groups; the researcher asked the women in the group who would like to be interviewed, some raised their hands immediately and others said that they would prefer not to. This shows signs of lack of self-confidence among some of them, they might feel comfortable and empowered talking within a group but will be hesitant to talk alone which. During the selection the researcher tried to chose the ones who were outspoken, charismatic and could provide the researcher with good material for the research. Two of the interviews depended on brief life-story telling which was very interesting and allowed the research to connect the structure of the profession to the ones working in it. According to Norman Denzin (1970), life history “presents the experiences and definitions held by one person, group, or organization as the person, group or organization interprets those experiences” (Denzin, 1970, 220). The total number of in-depth interviews with Domestic Workers is four (4).

For being a main stakeholder in the Domestic Work sector, interviews with employers of Domestic Workers also took place through personal contacts, to hear their part of the story and to be able to give a comprehensive picture about the structure of the profession. Total employers interviewed are five (5).

On the other hand, interviews with activists, development professionals, women leaders of NGOs, gender experts, activists, ex-parliamentarians, head of unions, and political parties’ members were conducted to see if the Domestic Workers’ issue was on the political agenda at all and if not then why. Interviews were made feasible through personal contacts of the researcher, but were also based on the assumption of the researcher that the respondents have a role to play in

the issue. It is important to note that the opinions of the respondents do not represent the opinions of their institutions but their represent their own personal views about the issue. The interviews helped the researcher in learning about the views of the respondents on possible ways to achieve protection for Domestic Workers (the recipe). This was particularly important because it reflected what they would push for on the political agenda and how. The total number of interviews for this category of respondents is ten (10).

### *Participant Observation*

The researcher is also part of the data. This was done on two time intervals, the researcher currently works at the UN Women and was a supervisor of a project managed by two NGOs to support Domestic Workers living in marginalized communities, during this time the researcher was able to spend time with Domestic Workers, learn about their problems, participate in meetings, roundtables and conferences. Supervision of the project was from the period of (January 2011-March 2012). During this time the participation of the researcher was at the capacity of being a UN Women member. The other time interval of acting as an observer was during (September 2013-January 2014), this time the researcher was not there as a supervisor, but as a researcher observing and learning.

### A Short Film

A short film about was prepared to visualize the research done, in order show the difference in views between the various participants of the research “to transform the research from the theoretical and hypothetical into something authentic that may affect women in very real ways” (Rizk, 2005, 14).

## Research Limitations

Limitations to this research are as follows:

### *1. Focus groups*

- a. The sample of Domestic Workers is not a representative sample and this is because there were no selection criteria for the Domestic Workers, it was random and based on the availability of the workers. It is important to note that getting 21 Domestic Workers to participate in the research was not an easy task and it could not have happened without the access that the researcher had through personal contacts with the NGOs. This is due to the hidden nature of Domestic Work, it occurs inside homes and getting the workers in one room is difficult. Although the sample of Domestic Workers is not representative, the groups dynamics were to a large extent harmonized as most of them are about the same age, they all live in marginalized slum communities (that represent other slum communities across Cairo), and their employers are from the middle class.
- b. The focus groups took place within the NGOs that have their support programme and this may have affected how they responded to some questions about the programme they are in. This is because saying anything negative about the NGOs might jeopardize their relations with the NGO that provides them with services they need. The researcher have tried to mitigate this through reiterating that she is not a member of the NGO and that she is conducting research and that they can express themselves freely. Also, the researcher made sure that she was alone with the Domestic Workers in the room to give more privacy for the women to express themselves freely.
- c. Some of the focus group participants were reluctant to speak up about the challenges they face in the profession and communicate their experiences to the researcher. This was

understood as the women might have had negative experiences that they might be embarrassed to reveal in front of others as well as the researcher herself who is a stranger. Furthermore, when vocalizing their negative experiences this will make them relive those experiences, which might cause discomfort and pain. This assumption was based on the researcher's observations as well as the literature covered that confirms that experiences of Domestic Workers do not tend to be positive ones, but full of challenges and some instances abuse. While some were reluctant to speak up others revealed to the researcher their problems and challenges and how do they cope with them, which was very useful.

- d. Within group dynamics, there were women who were very vocal and actively participating, and other women who rarely spoke, this constituted a challenge because the opinions of the outspoken women tended to dominate the discussion. However, the researcher did her best to facilitate and give room for others to voice their opinions, but it was not always successful.

## 2. *Interviews and Identity of the Researcher*

- a. The interviews with Domestic Workers are not considered a representative sample, as they were selected through the same method of selecting the participants of the focus groups, through personal contact and not through selection criteria.
- b. The identity of the researcher as a UN Women employee might have biased the discussion with some respondents, as there might have been a conflict of interest at times. As Bondi (1999) mentions, the identity of the researcher might affect the subjectivity of the data because of "their relations with those they research in the field or through interviews; interpretations they place on empirical evidence; access to data, institutions and outlets for research dissemination" (Bondi, 1999, 261-282). The researcher is aware of this issue, and

has taken steps to ensure that this challenge is mitigated. This was through getting an approval of the interview and focus group questions from the researcher's Supervisor. In addition, the researcher also trusts that respondents have been transparent and expressed themselves in the way that they want their opinions to be presented in this research, which most of them see as interesting and very important.

It is important to note that the researcher herself is an employer of two Domestic Workers; dissatisfaction with the service is something that the researcher realizes and has to deal with. On the other hand, it is empathy that is mostly the overwhelming feeling towards the two workers, and that is why the researcher is aware of her bias and makes the best effort to present the research in objectively.

This chapter meant to highlight the importance of studying Domestic Work as subject that reveals the many faces of gender inequality within conventional economic structures and its impact on the lives of millions of women across the globe that live everyday unprotected. It also highlighted the area of focus of the research, which is Domestic Workers living in informal settings in Cairo, the importance of having collective action with the support of human rights advocates and civil society groups. The chapter also included the methodology of the research. The second chapter will examine the literature of concepts such as gender, Domestic Work, development and organization and the relation between them, highlighting gaps and limitations. It will also focus on global trends in the paid Domestic Work sector. Chapter three (3) will focus on international country experience of Brazil and Kenya, and the role of trade unions and organized groups in advancing Domestic Workers rights. Then, it will give an overview of the Arab Region and the abuses that Domestic Workers face and finally. Chapter (4) will be a descriptive overview on Domestic Workers in Egypt with the problems



they face, the role of the media and latest developments. Chapter four (5) is devoted to the findings of the fieldwork done with Domestic Workers in slum communities in Cairo, employers of Domestic Workers and professionals working in the field of human rights, development and gender. Chapter five (5) is the conclusion of this research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK**

“Strike or unemployment, a woman’s work is never done”, this quote is from the work of Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972) on the relation between capitalism and the new social order that it created for the family and of course its effect on women. They state that in political and social struggles whether to survive during unemployment or to claim victory during strikes “Women rarely if ever got anything specifically for themselves, rarely if ever did the struggle have as an objective in any way altering the power structure of the home and its relation to the factory” (Costa and James, 1972, 13). It is very true and is seen nowadays in countries where the working class struggles to survive. It is often that when there is high unemployment in a country such as Egypt, women support men whether in protests, strikes and social movements or even through directly working and generating income for the home, however, this seizes to alter the patriarchal structure within the home, “men are men even if they do not work”. This chapter will capture the literature done on Domestic Work, its relation to the gender structure within society, as well as, the economic conceptualization of work that has led to the state of undervaluing work done inside the household, thus, devaluing paid domestic labour. The chapter will focus on 3 main issues: (i) what are the root causes of the undervaluation of Domestic Work as presented in conventional economic theories, (ii) Domestic Work in gender studies, and finally (iii) the global developments in paid Domestic Work.

The literature done on Domestic Work (Phizacklea (1995) Anderson 2001, Kaufka 2003, Ahmed 2003, etc...) suggest that Domestic Work is indeed an expanding area of occupation for groups across

the world, despite the twenty-first century approaches to poverty, unemployment and education. The fact that this profession has little exposure to the public sphere, it poses challenges both on the political, legislative and socio-economic levels. Domestic Work is dominated mostly by women, and is usually managed by other women, a special aspect about Domestic Work is that “it brings together, in a closed intimate sphere of human interaction, of people whose paths would never cross, were they to conduct to their lives within socioeconomic boundaries to which they were ascribed” (Dill, 1994, 3).

### **Why is Domestic Work Production? Economics of Production vs. Consumption**

Despite the fact that domestic labour caught attention in the 1960s and 70s, it was even earlier in the 1930s, that few economists such as Margaret Reid (1934) was able to address the divide between home economics and mainstream economics. In her book “*Economics of the Household*”, Reid explained that despite the importance of Domestic Work to the economy and society, the neglect of Domestic Work or as she calls it *household production* “is due to the fact that the household is not a money making institution...the more we have concentrated on money values the more we have overlooked that part of our economic system which is not organized on a profit basis” (Reid, 1934, 3). Her analysis was based on logical thinking of merging the household production in the production process of making goods available, and identifying the part that the household plays in this production “what activities contribute or aid in providing economic goods for family members” (Reid, 1934, 4). This takes us to the meaning of production itself, what is production? Reid explains that the concept of production “is now much broader. It is now commonly defined as the *creation of utility*; and utility is the want-satisfying power of a good. The goods, which are produced, may be material or non-material. They may be commodities such as cakes or dresses, or services such as

teaching or supervising children” (Reid, 1934, 7). This means that if we classify domestic labour as a service that satisfies the needs of the household, then it is in this sense a form of production. On the other hand some economists suggested that household production is something from the past and the household is now a place of flow of commodities, the household is rather a place of *consumption* not of *production*.

Reid provides a strong example on why the work of the household servant should be excluded from household production, she states, “the services and economic relationship of a servant to the family may be much the same whether he lives in or lives out. If a servant does not live in, his labour can be considered household production only because it is carried on in the house. But if one paid worker carrying on production at or in the house is considered to be a producer, it is logical to assume that all workers are. Accordingly the builder, the plumber the house decorator, the doctor, in so far as he comes to the house...and a whole host of other workers who at some point carry on their specialized work in a home would be household producers” (Reid, 1934, 5). In other words, not anything that is carried out in the household can be a household production. The example of the servant is significant as she points out that in the classical definition of production if the servant is a live-in, that does not make him/her a member of the household, thus his/her contribution is indeed a paid productive activity. She also points out the fact that women are considered consumers in general as they are assumed to not produce anything, they buy the goods needed for the home, they receive an allowance from their husbands. Furthermore, she classified the household activities into two categories: first the activities that involve purely personal relationships between the members of the household and second the activities that can be delegated to a person or acquired through an external

party. She defined the latter as production as it can be delegated to someone while the first cannot as it depends on intimate social intercourse that can only be done by the person. Reid writes:

*“We are now prepared to complete our definition of household production. It consists of those unpaid activities which are carried on, by and for members, which activities might be replaced by market goods or paid services, if circumstances such as income, market conditions, and personal inclinations permit the service being delegated to someone outside the household group.”* (Reid, 1923, 11)

This definition can definitely be applied to Domestic Work; Domestic Work is an activity that satisfies the needs of members of the home, members of the household can do it and it can also be delegated to a paid worker. Domestic Work satisfies the requirements of being a production even in the capitalist sense. However, there are other issues to consider; it is not only Domestic Work as an activity in itself, but perhaps there are other issues that should be considered such as the gender that dominates this profession and of course it is women. This is particularly important as to see how the gender segregation of labour has impacted Domestic Work in general and paid Domestic Work in particular. Not only that, (Watson, 1929, 50) argues “there is no clear line of demarcation between the social living of the home and the industrial aspects of home making”. Watson argues that the home consists of 3 main folds: the biological, the social and the economic and she adds that “we must recognize that the world as a whole is undergoing tremendous economic, educational and social changes, and that the family must readjust itself in carrying on its activities if it is to fulfill all three of these functions adequately” (Watson, 1929, 51). One of the key factors that Watson points out is the idea that household management requires the same skills, effort and time that could be compared to production in the factory. “One of the immediate active causes of high or low real income in a family

is efficiency in the housekeeping function of turning money into goods and satisfaction for each individual member...The direction of wealth consumption is an act of production, not of consumption” (Watson, 1929, 53). Again Watson confirms that although it may seem that household consumes the *money* income coming from the waged worker outside, the act of converting raw material into food, cleaning clothes and carpets and keeping the household clean is an act of production and not consumption.

In 1960s and 70s, as women’s participation in the labour force increased in capitalist countries of the west, the subject of Domestic Work gained more attention. The increase of the female labour force was not well received by many economists at the time and they “began to recognize and attempt to explain the ways in which female labour did not conform to the patterns of male employment” (Peterson and Lewis, 1999, 1). Married women’s participation in the labour force meant that there will be a gap in the household responsibilities, which by no means men were going to bear; they needed to be “free” of those responsibilities to focus on the work outside the household. “The New Home Economics used the individualist utility-maximizing methodology of neoclassical economics to analyze time spent within the home as ‘nonmarket time’, which they classified as neither consumption nor production” (Peterson and Lewis, 1999, 1).

### **Domestic Work and Gender: The Sociology of Domestic Workers**

Exploring the historical structure in which the *economic outlook* of Domestic Work has been institutionalized, as discussed in the previous section, is crucial if we wish to understand why paid Domestic Workers are in the place they are today. Building on that, gender studies have sought to explore Domestic Work in the social structure of the family, the privacy of the home (work place)

that the law could not penetrate and the inability of Domestic Workers to form a solid movement due to their isolation in homes and the movement that actually tried to organize this profession. The last point is particularly important as it will be shown that some movements that sought to organize and legalize the profession has in fact been established only to satisfy middle class women in having enough supply of *faithful servants*.

Many feminists suggest that the isolation of women from the public life following the industrial revolution and segregation that capitalism has created between men, women and children, has resulted in each of them having different experience from the other. Women's experience was mainly within the home doing the Domestic Work, children went to school to be prepared to be the future workforce and the men were the "waged laborers" at the factory. The denial of women from accessing the public space hindered their social knowledge and social education and thus had consequences on how the women were seen by the society and by themselves. Costa and James (1972) suggest that the "the isolation from which women have suffered has confirmed to the society and to themselves the myth of *female incapacity*" (Costa and James, 1972, 12). The physical, psychological and occupational subordination of women in the private and public spheres of the capitalist society as suggested by Costa and James "continues to have a precise and vital place in the capitalist division of labor, in pursuit of productivity at the social level" (Costa and James, 1972, 17). They state further "capital, precisely by instituting its family structure, has "liberated" the man from these functions so that he is completely "free" for direct exploitation; so that he is free to "earn" enough for a woman to reproduce him as labor power" (Costa and James, 1972, 17). This means that the fact that women were forcibly isolated from the public sphere under the slogan of industrialization has in fact stigmatized women with the incapacity to do *real* economic productivity, while her

productivity within the household was not taken seriously as a result of this stigma. From this point, Domestic Work was not and still is not taken seriously by many societies “anybody can do it”, and then it makes sense that Domestic Workers are completely off the map of the state protection

Smith (1999) described Domestic Workers’ employment position as “peculiar” stating that the reason why domestic service remained excluded for so long could be attributed to the job location within the private sphere. Working in the home is a determinant factor with regards to the social context within which Domestic Work takes place and Domestic Workers operate. From a deductive reasoning viewpoint, Oakley (1974) writes:

A general set of axioms is responsible for the place of women in the two areas of the family and marriage and industry and work. The neglect of housework as a topic is also anchored in these axioms. They can be stated thus:

1. Women belong in the family, while men belong “at work”
2. Therefore, men work, while women do not work
3. Therefore, housework is not a form of work

What Oakley refers to is a result of the placing of men and women in the modern industrial society, leaving the home increasingly privatized, thus, any activity that takes place inside is a family concern and should not be externally regulated. Dill (1994) writes “the private family came to be seen as a refuge from the world of work, its primary functions being socio-emotional and integrative and its activities considered being immune from bureaucratic rationality of the outside world” (Dill, 1994, 5). It is from this viewpoint that the housework performed by women to maintain their way of life



was ignored in sociological and economic conceptualization of work. This means that for housework performed by the housewife or delegated to the paid Domestic Worker, who is seen as an extension of the housewife, “is considered unskilled labour because it has been traditionally been thought that any woman knows how to do housework” (Dill, 1994, 5). With this being said, Domestic Workers’ positioning in the economy and society has been of peculiar nature; Dill states, “Like the housewife that employs her, the Domestic Workers’ low social status and pay are tied to the work itself, to her gender and to the complex interaction of the two within the family”.

Despite efforts to tackle the Domestic Work issue, “feminism has failed to address the issue of unequal power and privilege among women inherent in any serious analysis of the structure and organization of private household work” (Dill, 1994, 6). Feminism has yet to confront the roots of the problem which is that Domestic Work will only be the concern of women even if they hire paid workers to do it for them. Although men consume and benefit from Domestic Work activities, it is still the responsibility of women to ensure that this happens. Women will ensure housework is done whether through performing the work or “by hiring a Domestic Worker purchased to release them from their gender subordination in the home, effectively transforming their domestic responsibility to other women who are distinct and subordinated by class, ethnic background etc..” (Ahmed, 2003, 32). It is then apparent that Domestic Work with all its dynamics rather confirms the patriarchal structure of society than challenges it. Domestic Workers problems will not be resolved entirely unless the deep rooted and inherent gender structure within the family and society is altered. Romero (1993) “As a society we cannot continue to define reproductive labour as women’s work. Cultural values and norms reinforcing equality must start at home with the simple act of picking up for our selves. Beyond this, reproductive labour must be recognized as society’s work, a responsibility that requires

collective responses rather than private and individual solutions. The goal must be to develop strategies to allocate social burden of necessary reproductive labour in such a way that does not fall disproportionately on the shoulders of any group” (Romero, 1993).

### **Domestic Workers Globally: Situation and Problems**

Since the nineties, transnational paid Domestic Work has become a global phenomenon when international migration of women from low-growth countries increased dramatically. Heyzer, Lycklama, Weerakoon (1994) states that for low-growth countries that suffered high foreign debts and unemployment “the export of women’s labour as Domestic Workers has become an increasingly important source of foreign exchange, of regular remittances to supplement household incomes and of labour absorption in a situation of chronic unemployment”. A big business of trade of Domestic Workers has emerged as more educated women of high growth countries entered the labour force and left a gap in social reproduction and according to Heyzer, Lycklama and Weerakoon this is due to the “the interaction of uneven growth with the existing intra- and inter-household gender division of labour” (Heyzer, Lycklama and Weerakoon, 1994).

“Domestic Workers are usually not male breadwinners but overwhelmingly women (who may well be the main breadwinners for their families and themselves) and, in many countries, child labourers. Further, these workers often either belong to historically disadvantaged and despised communities such as minority ethnic groups, indigenous peoples, low-caste, low-income rural and urban groups, or are migrants. They are therefore particularly vulnerable to discrimination in respect of conditions of employment and work.” (ILO, Domestic Work Policy Brief, 2011, 1).

The problems that Domestic Workers are subjected to can vary in its forms depending on their work modality (live-in, live-out, international migrant, illegal migrant etc.). However, there are common problems that Domestic Workers share in their jobs regardless of their work modality and they can be summarized to be “undervalued, underpaid, unprotected and poorly regulated” (ILO, Domestic Work Policy Brief, 2011, 1). In the majority of countries worldwide, “Domestic Workers are not covered by minimum labour and social protection in terms of wages, hours of work, resting periods and benefits such as health care and maternity leaves” (ILO, Domestic Workers in Cambodia, 2008, 7). Problems can be discussed in terms of: Work Location, Working Hours, Minimum Wage, and the research will be talking about each problem separately.

### Work Location

The fact that Domestic Work takes place inside the *Home* is a major determinant of the working conditions and terms the Domestic Worker is working under. Working in the home isolated from other peer workers is a real impediment of the organization of this sector. Gomes and Bertolin (2010) state, “Domestic Work is performed at home where conditions are quite different from those found in a typical workplace. Domestic Workers work mostly by themselves and are generally isolated from other such workers” (Gomes and Bertolin, 2010, 2). Moreover, the literature reviewed has shown that workers who are “live-ins” tend to face more problems, as they are more vulnerable to forms of abuses. “International experience learns that there is a prevalent lack of privacy and safe living spaces for live-in Domestic Workers, which may lead to situations of abuse and exploitation, in particular for young women and girls” (ILO, Domestic Workers in Cambodia, 2008, 8). Working in the home also by default assumes a personal relationship between the employer and the worker, which is not present in other professions. On a subject level analysis of Domestic Work, Gregson and

Lowe (1994) describe this relation as the “false kinship/friendship” and Ahmed (2003) states “employers can switch the relationship with their domestics to a work relationship or a personal one as long as this “switch” works to the employer’s benefit” (Ahmed, 2003, 30). This applies particularly to the nanny’s case where she “assumes the form of a mother substitute and hence becomes permeated by feelings of attachment and obligation” (Ahmed, 2003, 30).

### Working Hours

Domestic Workers encounter unregulated working hours, depending on the work being done; the worker is often expected to finish the work regardless if the work would exceed the limit of normal working hours. The problem of the unregulated working hours could be found more with the live-in Domestic Workers. In Chile, live-in Domestic Workers have been found to work 20 hours more per week than the live-out Domestic Workers (ILO, 2013a, 58). In addition, Domestic Workers are expected by their employers to be available 24 hours and are hardly entitled for leaves; ILO recent estimate found that 44.4% of Domestic Workers are not entitled to annual leave (ILO, 2013b, 4). For the case of live-in Domestic Workers, where many of them prefer living on the premises on the employer where they can have adequate housing especially if they are in foreign countries, this ceases to be an advantage when they are faced by the different violations among them is being on call 24 hours. In addition, Domestic Workers face additional challenges when they are “dismissed or must escape from an exploitive or abusive employer, as they often become homeless as well as unemployed” (ILO, 2013b, 2).

### Minimum Wage

Like any typical workers, Domestic Workers participate in this profession to secure a livelihood for themselves and their families, but what makes Domestic Workers particularly challenged is that their remuneration is far lower. There is a range of interlinked factors that need to be considered when analyzing the lower wages problem faced by most Domestic Workers around the globe. The low level of average skills required for the job, levels of education, and low socio-economic are partially a reflection of low wages. However, evidence suggests that Domestic Workers receive even less than workers in comparable occupations (ILO, 2013a, 67). The typical perception of Domestic Work being the responsibility of women also had a negative impact on wages with regards to paid Domestic Work. Remuneration might not be on the basis of the work performed or skills required and efforts, but might as well depend on gender or ethnic and social origins of the worker. Domestic Work thus reflects gender-based pay discrimination. What have made it even harder to acquire fair remuneration compared to the effort and work done is the weak collective bargaining power of Domestic Workers “traditional collective bargaining models are not very practical for a sector that is typically as dispersed, isolated and fragmented as the Domestic Work sector” (ILO, 2013a, 70). Minimum wages for Domestic Workers have been covered by legislations of various countries, below is the percentages of the statuses of minimum wages for Domestic Workers.

## Minimum wage coverage for domestic workers, 2010

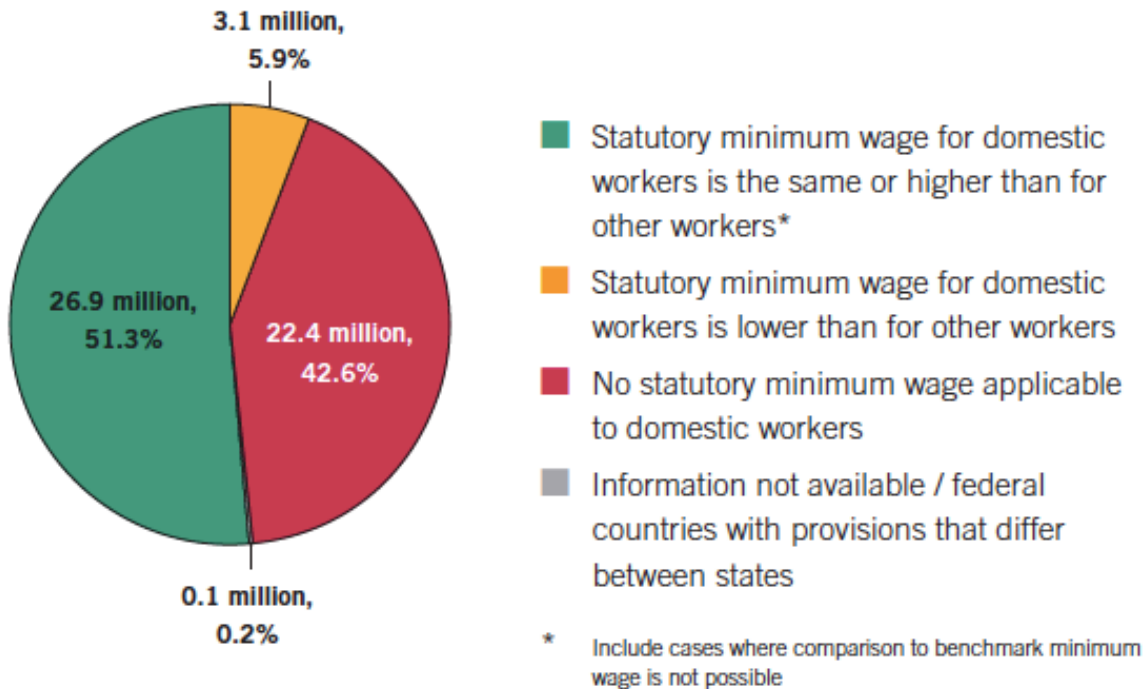


Figure 1: Domestic Worker Across the World: Global and Regional Statistics and the Extent of Legal Protection, ILO, 2013

Minimum wage will not only guarantee that workers will have equal status compared to other workers, but will also ensure that there is a legal framework between the employer and the worker which will ensure the rights of each.

### Global Efforts to Protect the Rights of Domestic Workers

Numerous efforts have been put with the aim of organizing Domestic Workers and ensuring that there is a regulatory framework that states should employ to protect and institutionalize Domestic Workers. State protection is the first step towards achieving the rights of Domestic Worker and this is what the ILO has done with 189 Domestic Workers Convention, but a body that organizes Domestic

Workers is as important and that is why the International Domestic Workers' Network will be mentioned as a very good example for that.

### *ILO Decent Work and (189) Convention 2011*

The ILO decent work is an important international umbrella under which the rights of unprotected working groups such as Domestic Workers are included. Decent work “sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.” (ILO, Decent Work Website)

*The ILO 189 Convention 2011* was issued after efforts of government, employer, and Domestic Worker delegates convened to find out the best ways that the treaty would ensure decent working standards for Domestic Workers around the world. The convention adopts a holistic approach so as to cover all aspects of the circumstances that Domestic Workers work in. The convention starts by defining Domestic Work and identifies Domestic Workers; it then sets the basic principles that should be adopted by ratifying states to ensure proper protection for Domestic Workers initially by ensuring appropriate inclusion on state legislation. The principles mentioned in the convention include but are not limited to: measures to promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work (freedom of association, elimination of all forms of forced labour, elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, effective abolition of child labour) (Article 3). In addition, the convention sets out the occupational principles that states should adopt to ensure decent work for

Domestic Workers (ensuring Domestic Workers are informed about their terms and conditions of employment, regulation of working hours, proper remuneration and annual leaves, ensuring appropriate living conditions in cases of live-in Domestic Workers, ensuring the occupational safety and health of Domestic Workers and ensuring access to complaint mechanisms as well as appropriate legal procedures in case of dispute settlement) (Articles, 7, 9, 13, 15 and 17). To date only eight countries have ratified the convention (Bolivia, Italy, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Philippines, South Africa and Uruguay). It is important to note that this treaty does not only protect Domestic Workers, they are protected by: the Protection of Wage Convention 1949, the Equal Remuneration Convention 1951, Minimum Wage Fixing Convention 1970, The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979. However, the ILO 189 Convention came as a landmark specifically to spell out the demands of a category of workers that seemed to be forgotten for so long despite the existence of the previously mentioned conventions.

#### *International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN)*

Formerly launched in 2009, the IDWN had been actively participating in the ILO process to reach the ILO convention on the protection of the rights of Domestic Workers. The IDWN gathers representatives from Domestic Workers' organizations and unions, and are supported by the Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). The IDWN aim at:

- “Strong democratic Domestic Workers' organization to protect Domestic Workers' rights
- Change power relations in society, to promote gender equality and human rights for the benefits of Domestic Workers
- Democracy and accountability at the organization level
- Solidarity with other labour movements” (IDWN website)



Having a global body such as the IDWN is extremely important so as to ensure that the problems of Domestic Workers are always on the agenda of international organizations as well as states. The IDWN still needs to grow and have more impact, however, it is a good start for the realization of Domestic Workers rights.

### **Country Practices: Conditions, Failures and Successes**

What has been common among country experience such as Brazil and Kenya, was that it was through unionized workers and the efforts of feminist groups that Domestic Workers would achieve protection. When paid Domestic Work was organized it was not always for the sake of Domestic Workers; it was for the employers to find well-trained workers. The problem with this approach is that it has caused either no change in Domestic Workers status or has even harmed them more. That is why unionized Domestic Workers and organized women's rights groups had to exert a lot of effort so as to ensure that the state does not only regulate, it regulates and protects. On the other hand, it is found that in Middle East and Arab countries, due to the political nature of the countries, it has been mostly the pressure coming from international organizations such as the United Nations, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International that have brought about a slight change.

This chapter will start by giving international experience from Brazil and Kenya showing the importance of the bottom-up approach of regulation of Domestic Workers. Then it will give an overview of the situation of Domestic Workers in the Middle East and Arab World.

*Domestic Workers in Brazil*

Domestic Workers in Brazil were largely marginalized until the 1960s when the constitution started to provide them with some rights and state protection. Rights and protection were not gained over night; it was over years that Domestic Workers achieved a victory after another. For example, after the return to democracy in 1988, a successful alliance with the feminist and the women's movement resulted in many victories for Domestic Workers in the new constitution including minimum wage, maternity leaves, annual leaves and advance notice. In 2000, their rights were extended to include the right to unemployment compensation. In 2006, Domestic Workers gained the right to "20 days vacation and time off for civil and religious holidays; job guarantee for pregnant women, and to not have housing, food and personal hygiene products used at the place of work deducted from their wages." (Gonçalves, 2010, 18).

Despite the regulation, Domestic Workers still faced challenges, "only 25.8 percent of Domestic Workers had their labour card registered and only 29.3 percent contributed to the social security system and even though informality has decreased, it has decreased at a rate slower than the rate for other workers" (Gomes and Bertolin 2010, 10). There were two explanations for the resistance of domestics to formalize; first, as mentioned by Gomes and Bertolin, "almost one-third of Domestic Workers receive less than the minimum wage and, among unregistered Domestic Workers, 40.4% receive less than the minimum wage" (Gomes and Bertolin 2010, 10). Second, it has also been mentioned that this system of regulation did not aim primarily to provide Domestic Workers their labor rights but for "sanitary and security reasons". This means that the state did not target Domestic Workers in its protective policies; it sought to protect the employers who hire Domestic Workers and

complain about sanitary and security issues, not recognizing that low wages and exclusions are the reason behind these two problems.

The form of social discrimination in Brazil that Domestic Workers face is doubled, not only by gender, but also by color and race. Women represent 95% of Domestic Workers (Gonçalves, 2010, 3) and mainly black women dominate the profession across Brazil, and they are at the bottom of the salary pyramid. “Women of color are often positioned in the space where racism or xenophobia, class and gender meet” (Gonçalves, 2010, 3). Despite those difficulties, organization seems to be a powerful weapon when it comes to pressuring the state; for example, Domestic Workers were recognized by the state because of the efforts of the National Federation of Domestic Workers supported by women’s groups and the National Council for Women. After pressure and negotiation with the support of women’s rights groups, the government of Brazil established a permanent table of negotiation with the National Federation of Domestic Workers, to discuss the problems of Domestic Workers and seek ways to advance their rights and it was from this point that actually Domestic Workers were included step by step in the law. However, this was not enough, “a campaign, ‘Rights Can Not be Less, Only More’ and many more were launched to improve social awareness about Domestic Work, with the objective of lessening the informal nature of work as well as the disrespect of Domestic Workers’ right” (Gonçalves, 2010, 3). “Women’s organizing for labour rights has produced achievements that go beyond the general worker’s fight for labour and social welfare laws. They illustrate the potential to transform unions into channels of expression and the fight for equality in gender and race relations” (Gonçalves, 2010, 16). In April 2013, the Brazilian Congress passed a constitutional amendment that grants Domestic Workers the same rights as salaried workers, including the eight-hour workdays and overtime pay. “Lawmakers and labor rights advocates lauded the amendment, while others feared rounds of dismissals and the end of hired help for the upper-

middle classes” (Conde, April 2013, The Rio Times). The situation is still uncertain, many are happy with the new law, others fear that prices of Domestic Workers will be very high that only a few percentage of the Brazilian population would be able to afford domestic help, while many workers would be laid off. The struggle continues, and having been recognized by the government is in itself a great deal, and having equal rights as other workers should lead to good results.

The example of Brazil is an example of a bottom-up approach that proves that the alliance of marginalized groups such as the Domestic Workers with feminist and women’s rights movements is crucial in a) gaining state recognition and b) spreading awareness in society which will never come with a protective law only.

### *Domestic Workers in Kenya*

Working for decades, the most prominent organization that leads on promoting Domestic Workers rights in Kenya is *Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotel, Educational Institutions, Hospitals, and Allied Workers* (KUDHEIHA). With 1.8 million Domestic Workers in Kenya (Organizing Domestic Workers in Kenya, 2012, 8), unorganized and exposed to all kinds of abuses at work, the KUDHEIHA works on empowering those workers with knowledge and skills as well as trying to organize them. The Union is mainly concerned about Kenyan Domestic Workers’ neglect at the social and policy levels that has been growing over the past few years. The Union uses scientific research, which is very important in targeting policy change or awareness, as well as providing support to grievances, disputes and court cases involving Domestic Workers.

The developments in the Kenyan law under which Domestic Workers are protected included five core labour laws in 2007: The Employment Act 2007, the Labour Relations Act 2007, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2007, the Labour Institution Act 2007 and the Work Injury

Benefits Act 2007. In addition, there has been a Presidential Circular 2008, which gave the Ministry of Labour the mandate to enforcing minimum wage legislation. Although Kenya has somewhat progressive laws that protect Domestic Workers, according to many they are mostly not applied. “Kenya has legislation to protect the rights of Domestic Workers but it is rarely enforced, and few of the women know about the existence of the (KUDHEIHA), which was set up to protect their rights.” (IRINI News, 2009).

A very interesting development in Kenyan prosecution lately has been the court rulings that represented winning battles for Domestic Workers. A court ruling issued in December 19, 2012, but did not get much attention due to the rubble of electoral politics, “effectively leaves every household with a Domestic Worker liable to prosecution for breach of the Employment Act *with or without a written contract*” (International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), 2013). In the case of an employer who dismissed his Domestic Worker after 50 months of service and not giving her full compensation of work, “the Domestic Worker walked away with one month salary in lieu of a dismissal notice, house allowance at 15 per cent of her monthly pay for the 50 months of service and compensation of accrued leave” (ICJ, 2013). This is a very powerful example, as the court ruling affirms the validity of verbal contracts and sends a warning to households for breach of that. The court ruling is another tool that confirms a fair interpretation that does not need the usual full documentation that might be required in other countries such as a written contract. The fact that the Domestic Worker who won the case walked away with a good amount of financial compensation ensures that rights of decent pay will not be lost. Court rulings are from the first steps to brining laws in effect. It could be said that Kenya is on its way for a better position for Domestic Workers on the different levels, they have the legal framework in place, they have a strong union that works on awareness and lobbying, it is a matter of time that things materialize.

### Domestic Workers in the Arab World

Most Middle East countries are at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI), as well as, the Gender Development Index (GDI). While some countries display high rank in HDI, it should be noted that the HDI involves standard of living, which might be high in gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia; on the other hand, its rank in the GDI reveals the disparities that exists. For example, out of 187 ranked countries worldwide, Egypt ranks 112 in the HDI and 126 in the GDI, while Saudi Arabia ranks 57 in the HDI and 145 in the GDI, Jordan ranks 100 in the HDI, and 99 in the GDI (Gender Inequality Index, UNDP Database, 2012).

Uprisings of 2011 starting with Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, and Bahrain were a proof of the existing human rights disparities in the Arab region. The existing oppression of freedoms and civil rights, the disrespect for human dignity were fuels of the Arab uprisings. The revolutions in countries like Egypt and Tunisia started with a call for freedom and social justice and then took uncertain paths. The elected Muslim Brotherhood candidate in Egypt Mohamed Morsi did not give very promising future prospects for human rights in Egypt. Moreover, with the second uprising on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, and the possible nomination of Marshal Abdel Fattah Al Sisi for Presidency, hopes for real democratic reform have gone uncertain again. The translation of high-level politics on the poor and a category such as Domestic Workers is probably more oppression and poverty, a maybe slight improvement in conditions to give materialistic political processes a human rights dye.

Violations against Domestic Workers are just a reflection of the environment of disregard to human rights that characterizes the Middle East and Arab region. Reports from Human Rights Watch (2008) and UN Women (2009) reported the different abuses that Domestic Workers face in Saudi Arabia and Jordan. There are approximately 1.5 million women Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia and close to 70,000 Domestic Workers in Jordan (UN Women, 2009) coming primarily from Asian

countries. Examples of abuses mentioned by the Human Rights Watch in Saudi Arabia reported “beatings, deliberate burnings with hot irons, threats, insults, and forms of humiliation such as shaving a Domestic Worker’s head. Food deprivation was a common abuse. There were women who reported rape, attempted rape, and sexual harassment, typically by male employers or their sons, and in some instances, by other foreign workers whom they had approached for assistance (Human Rights Watch, 2008)”. Similar forms of abuses of Domestic Workers take place in Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait and other Arab countries. There has been a considerable progress in several Arab countries’ legal systems to protect Domestic Workers due international pressure, the ILO 189 convention of 2011 and the different ILO conventions and standards on migrant Domestic Workers considering the vast majority of Domestic Workers in those countries are also migrant workers. Examples of the measures mentioned by the conventions are having a standard contract, inspection by the Ministry of Labour, standardizing minimum wages, working hours, and leaves, but those standards have been yet fully applied. It is important to note that migrant Domestic Workers face another layer of discrimination at the different legal and socio-economic levels and accordingly special measures are needed to deal with their circumstances.

Based on the above literature review, this research is contextualized in the different levels of patriarchal structures and their prominence within which much of the analysis is done. On the one hand, the gender segregation of labour and its effect on how women’s labour is perceived and dealt with inside the household. On the other hand, the idea of progressive legislative changes to promote the rights of Domestic Workers, which is then impeded by the fundamental nature of the patriarchal state structure. The very basic definition of the “household” as an isolated unit that is not involved the production cycle, and thus what occurs within its boundaries is not considered production. Not to

mention the assumed female incapacity, which confirms the society's perception of women's subordination and defines how society views women and how women view themselves.

The above-mentioned context confirms that is necessary for Domestic Workers to construct alternative forms of pressure and this research considers collective action as a stronger tool than organization for Domestic Workers. Collective action will maybe allow Domestic Workers to challenge the deeply rooted patriarchal structures and pressure policy makers to bring about changes that promote their rights, and the presence of international organizations such as the ILO, UN and IDWN is of added value to the workers.

The chapter meant to highlight the theoretical framework of the thesis in terms of having gender as the macro-level of analysis and Domestic Work as micro-level of analysis, and to see how each of them affect each other in one way or another. The literature highlighted in the research provided analysis to the economic and sociological perspectives to which domestic work operates within. The capitalist division of labour and how it impacted the work of women within the household is one of the important points that this chapter focuses on. Also this chapter provides analysis as to how the gender discourse dealt with this issue and how the work done on this issue was challenging on the many levels.

It was very important to demonstrate country practices and to see the different approaches to the issue, so this chapter covered the experiences of Brazil and Kenya. Brazil's experience shows that policies put in place to coordinate Domestic Work were not sufficient to resolve the problems of Domestic Workers, as the approach itself was to satisfy employers. On the other hand, the experience of Kenya highlighted the importance of collective action among Domestic Workers, and the



dynamics by which this happened; through forming alliances and networking with women's rights groups, other workers' groups and feminist movements. The experience of Kenya also shows that rights are not gained over night, lobbying and negotiations are key for change.

Furthermore, the chapter sought to provide a glimpse of the situation in the Middle East and Arab Region; emphasizing on the lack of protection for Domestic Workers in any of the countries. Domestic Workers are clearly not the maps within the region, and in some countries it is an issue of migrant Domestic Workers that requires other special measures. Domestic Workers are exposed to different kinds of abuses and they are offered no legal or social protection and the situation becomes even worse if they are migrant Domestic Workers. Emphasizing on the situation in the Arab region was essential as to contextualize the environment within which Egypt is situated in. This shows that Egypt is operating in a context which patriarchy dominates and where there is a general lack of measures to ensure human rights, women's rights and workers rights. This leads us the to the next chapter which provides an overview of the Egyptian situation within the context of the analysis provided in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### DOMESTIC WORKERS IN EGYPT

Egypt has a deepening poverty and low status of women; hopes went high after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution, but they are yet to materialize. Domestic Workers are affected in a multidimensional way, from a patriarchal structure that is conformed by men and women, poverty and high illiteracy rates, which makes them more vulnerable and unaware of their rights, and a legislation that specifically discriminates against them. Not to mention the inferior societal look to this profession that makes Domestic Workers hide their real jobs even from their closest relatives. On the other hand, Egyptian employers of Domestic Worker display high dissatisfaction with the service they receive from Egyptian Domestic Workers, which reflects the lack of skills of Egyptian Domestic Workers compared to foreign ones. Despite this situation, this chapter will present the efforts being done mainly by CSOs and international organizations to support and organize Domestic Workers to gain their rights.

#### **Background & Context**

##### *Status of Women in Egypt*

Egypt has a highly patriarchal society and this is reflected on the political and economic levels. “Gender discrimination and prevailing cultural norms have hampered the realization and advancement of women’s rights” (Korayem, 2013, 32). Illiteracy rates among women exceed the 40% (Egypt State Information Service), and this constitutes a huge barrier to their economic and political participation and pushes them into low-waged jobs. According to the Survey of Young People (SYPE) (2011), only 27.2% of young men and 41.0% of young women agree that men and women should equally share domestic chores. When it comes to decision-making power, the SYPE (2011) reveals that the majority of males believe that a woman must obey her male relative (husband

or brother) and obtain their permission in anything she does. At the mean time even among young women, almost half (49.1%) think that a girl must obey her brother even if he is younger than her and (74.7%) believe a wife must obtain her husband's permission for anything she wants to do. Furthermore, the SYPE (2011) reveals that 92.9% of young men and 81% of young women believe men should have priority over women for work when jobs are scarce. These perceptions are automatically reflected on the economic and political levels. For example, there are very few women in decision-making positions and this is because how can the society trust a woman with powerful political positions when there has to be a male chaperoning all her decisions, again confirming (*female incapacity*). On the other hand, few men believe that house chore responsibilities should be shared, which puts the women in a position where they have to bear all house chores responsibilities because they have to obey their husbands, and this is where domestic help might be hired by capable households, but in the end it is the woman's responsibility.

Furthermore "because Egyptian labor law gives women workers various rights, many private sector owners and managers are reluctant to hire female wage-workers as they consider their employment to be a costly venture. Because of the limited opportunities available to Women in the private formal sectors, female workers resort to finding jobs in the informal sector" (Korayem, 2013). It is interesting to see that women head a large yet unknown number of Egyptian households, but the economic and household-decision making power still goes to men.

Women are also subject to Gender-Based Violence (GBV), a phenomenon that is considered a taboo and remains buried with the exception of public sexual harassment, which has gained some attention during the last period. The SYPE (2011) confirms that the majority of young women and

men believe that it is ok for a man to beat his wife if she does something to upset him like speaking to another man or refusing to have sex with him, the higher the level of education and social standard the fewer the percentages of wife battering was shown. “The most disturbing finding is the large segment of Egypt’s youth population, including women against whom violence is directed; who believe gender based violence (harassment and wife battery) could be justified in a number of situations” (SYPE, 2011).

### *The Underground Economy of Egypt: The Informal Sector*

The informal sector is a growing yet unrealized economic contribution to the economy; it employs millions of women and men in Egypt with no protection. The Egypt Human Development Report EHDR (2010) shows that the total number of workers in the informal sector increased to 7.9 million, up from 5 million between 1996 and 2006, and it has definitely increased after 2011 uprising. Despite this huge number, nothing has been done to offer any kind of protection for workers in the informal economy. Furthermore, 37% of females occupy informal sector employment (EHDR, 2010). Working in the informal sector might offer flexibility for workers, might even offers higher incomes, but also entails high insecurity and lack of protection. It has been widely agreed that most workers in the informal sector suffer from poor working conditions “Such employment is often characterized by poor working conditions, both in terms of remuneration and the existence and/or enforcement of basic labor standards. Further, informal employment can leave too many workers frozen out of the networks they need to access to insert themselves higher up in the global value chains that their labor so often serves... Improving the economic position of informal workers is thus a powerful potential lever for raising living standards and reducing poverty in the developing world” (Avirgan , Bivens & Gammage, 2005, 1). Informal workers also work longer hours than formal employers do, for

example, statistics of 1998 in Egypt show that “the average number of hours worked in the informal economy was 51.6 per week, compared to 44.6 hours per week on average worked in the formal economy...and although workers in both the formal and informal economy have seen their average work hours rise, growth in the informal sector has been 3.7 times greater” (Avirgan, Bivens & Gammage, 2005, 14).

### **Domestic Workers’ Challenges in Egypt**

The patriarchal political and socio-economic structure of Egypt coupled with lack of sufficient coordination between bodies who can provide the needed supported constitute the main challenges for Domestic Workers in Egypt. It is a real challenge to find data available on Domestic Workers in Egypt and this contributes to the continued invisibility of those workers in Egypt. However, through few researches, findings about their profiles and conditions could be made. A UN Women funded scoping study conducted by Al Shehab Foundation for Comprehensive Development and the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights titled “Domestic Workers in Egypt: Conditions, Problems and Protection Mechanisms” (2011), offered a good overview of the situation of Domestic Workers in Egypt. The study reveals that the size of foreign Domestic Workers exceeds 1.5 million workers, and they come mainly from Asian and African countries, noting that the governments of those foreign workers set the minimum age for Domestic Workers to 25 years old, in addition to the trainings the workers receive before emigrating for work. The study reveals that the wages are mostly defines by nationality, for example, the Philippine workers earn the highest wage while the Sudanese come at the lowest of the wage ladder, the Egyptian Domestic Worker is out of this competition in the first place. The CAPMAS<sup>1</sup> statistics reveal that there are about 0.5 million recruitment agencies in

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<sup>1</sup> Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS)

<sup>2</sup> Femocrats is a term used to describe feminists who hold senior positions in government bureaucracy.

Egypt, 75% are in Cairo and 60% specialize in recruiting foreign workers (Domestic Workers in Egypt, 2011).

Women Domestic Workers in Egypt come from a low socio-economic background, most of them are illiterate, have low skills and many of them are heads of households (breadwinners for their families). They mostly start at a very young age as revealed by Jureidini and Ahmed 2010 “When families are struggling to survive in rural areas, girls are also more likely to migrate for Domestic Work, whereas boys are more likely to stay behind in rural villages to work in the agricultural sector”. Furthermore, significant numbers of girls living and working in Cairo would, if asked,

The Domestic Workers in Egypt Study (2010) also presents records of cases of Domestic Workers who “were victims of abuses like withhold of payment, torture, house arrest, forced labor, sexual violence and even murder”. One reported case was a girl aged 13 years old, was subjected to worst forms of abuse and torture that caused irreversible physical damage to her, all this to intimidate her from leaving work and going back to her parents. When the girl tried to escape, she fell from the third floor and broke her leg and arm; the employer of this Domestic Worker was sentenced to 15 years in jail. This case reveals a) complete disregard for the minimum age for work (child labour), b) if it wasn’t for the public scene of the girl jumping outside the house, the case would have probably remained invisible c) the low socio-economic status of the girl’s family who pushed the girl to be exposed to these dangerous conditions of work at this very young age. Many other cases are similar to this case, extreme cases are revealed, and many remain hidden behind walls. Another reported case involved a murder and theft committed by a Domestic Worker and her husband against her employer, the Domestic Worker was sentenced to 15 years in jail and her husband was sentenced for execution

(Domestic Workers in Egypt, 2011). A case reported in 2007 in Alexandria related to Domestic Work, was a young man who committed suicide after knowing his mother works as a Domestic Worker. This case especially reveals the degraded social status of Domestic Workers; the young man who felt so dishonored to the extent that he killed himself is a sign of the social stigma and intolerable culture to this kind of work, despite it being a job that puts food on the table for thousands of families across Egypt.

Some of the important findings of the Domestic Workers in Egypt study (2011) showed the following:

1. 100% of the surveyed sample (318 female Domestic Worker) mentioned that the main motive for work is to increase the income for their families that mostly suffer from poverty and unemployment.
2. 29.6% of the surveyed sample of female Domestic Workers work for (three to five households), and 64% of the surveyed sample revealed that they move from house to house due to ill treatment of the families they work for.
3. The average income for Domestic Workers as mentioned by the interviewed recruitment offices is between EGP 1,000 (\$144) to EGP1,500 (\$217) per month for university degrees holders. While the average income of Domestic Workers with middle education is around EGP 600 to EGP 900 (less than \$100) per month.
4. Employers interviewed in the study indicated the problems they see with Egyptian Domestic Workers and this included behavioral and skills problems such as: lying, constant complaining, disobedience to the employer's orders, negligence and breaking of household items, sometimes theft of (food, money, jewelry and kitchen utilities),

excessive usage of cleaning and cooking material. In addition to lack of punctuality, absence with unreal excuses, and doing the housework carelessly to leave work early.

The above-mentioned findings indicate that there is a real problem from both the Domestic Worker and the employer's side. Domestic Workers are unskilled both on the personal and professional side, they are pushed into this work just because it is the only job available that suits their qualifications. On the other hand, the employer does not get satisfied by the service received, and often tend to resort to foreign workers for that reason. All this necessitates the intervention for regulation of this profession so that both sides would be satisfied.

#### *Domestic Workers in the Media*

The Egyptian media is just another reflection of the patriarchal social structure of Egypt, with very few exceptions; the Egyptian film and drama industries have become more male dominated and gender insensitive in recent year. During the past period few films and drama series have addressed women's issues in an objective way, women are always mostly displayed as vulnerable and helpless or maneuvering. Egyptian films and TV series tend to show Domestic Workers as ill treated and inferior and always have other intentions than just do a job that provides for their families. Despite the fact that many of the films and drama series are based on real stories, they tend to display the negative side of the profession only.

Some Egyptian movies have addressed the issues of Domestic Workers from several perspectives; some have discussed their struggle within the households they are working in and the abuse they face by their employers, while others have focused on the employers' struggle to find the right Domestic Worker who does not take advantage of having access to the employers' belongings



and is someone to trust. The movie “Good Morning my dear wife” (1969) is about a newly married couple that is looking for someone to help with the chores as the wife just got pregnant and can no longer do everything on her own. The movie portrays the struggle of the couple as they go from one bad experience to the other: the one who steals from them, the one who mistreats their baby, the one who doesn’t finish any task and so on. They finally opt for not hiring anyone and manage things themselves.

On the other hand the movie “Ahlam, Hend and Kamelia” (1988) shows 2 Domestic Workers who have tried working for several employers. The movie depicts the different types of abuse they face within the households they work in and the abuse in their own homes. There are several films that have portrayed the struggle of the Domestic Workers such as “Mouths and Rabbits” (1977), “The Nightingale's Prayer” (1959) and “Love of the Masters” (1966) and others.

On the other hand, we can see that a prominent Journalist such as Ibrahim Issa has dedicated an episode of his Talk Show (25/30) on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 to inform the audience about conditions of Domestic Workers in Egypt and as well as update them with the latest developments. The episode’s guests were: a woman journalist, a representative from the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration, a member from the Newly Established Domestic Workers Union and representative from the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPC) which supported the establishment of this union. The episode discussed the problems of Domestic Workers from legal, social and economic perspective as well as about the newly established Domestic Workers Union. This can be seen as a positive step, there is at least dialogue about the issue; there is a need for more media attention that sheds the light on the issue in an objective manner.

## Latest Developments: A Union and an NGO



Figure 2 Monthly Paid Domestic Workers Union, Monofeya Governorate

Figure 2 is a banner of the newly established Domestic Workers Union (the Monofeya Governorate Branch). The banner indicates 2 things: a) the union is expanding geographically to cover governorates outside Cairo b) the banner implies that union is for monthly paid Domestic Workers only which excludes casual workers.

Despite the gloomy picture, there is indeed hope for change if effective collaboration between involved parties takes place. There is a political opportunity present with the new 2014 Egyptian constitution, it is comprised of 247 articles, at least 20 of which ultimately benefit women. The preamble of the constitution states “we the citizens of Egypt (men and women), we are the Egyptian people, this is our will and this is the constitution of our revolution”. In specific Article (11), states, *“The state is committed to the protection of women against all forms of violence, and to empower women to balance their family and work duties. It is also committed to providing care and protection to mothers, children, women-headed households, elderly and the neediest women”*. Furthermore, 49 articles benefit workers, for example, Article (13) states, *“The State shall protect workers' rights and*

*strive to build balanced work relationships between both parties to the production process. It shall ensure means for collective negotiations, protect workers against work risks, guarantee the fulfillment of the requirements of security, safety and occupational health, and prohibit unfair dismissal, all as regulated by Law” (Labour Law, GOE Portal).* Official statement of the Minister of Manpower and Migration before the constitution referendum confirms that he supports the new constitution as it contains articles that protect the rights of workers even in the informal sector, and that the labour law is currently being amended, he continues “The Labour Law is one of the most important laws that can be enacted in any country in the world, to the law’s regulation of the social and economic relationship between citizens of the same country, as well as its preservation and protection of the rights of all, and equal opportunities it gives” (Al Watan News, December 2013).

In 2013 Egypt saw the establishment of the first Domestic Workers Union and Domestic Workers NGO. Although the two bodies were established within the same period there seems to be no communications or collaboration between them.

#### Domestic Workers NGO “Helpers”

“Helpers” was established March 2012, it was through an initiative that supported the capacity building of Domestic Workers and building cadres among them who could lead on calling for their rights. 20 Domestic Workers from Greater Cairo with the support of Al Shehab Foundation and EASER founded the NGO. The head of the NGO is Ms. Mona Saad, a young Domestic Worker from Ezbet el Hagganna. The main goals of the NGO is to for the establishment of a Domestic Workers Syndicate to defend the rights of Domestic Workers in Egypt, inclusion of Domestic Workers in the Labour Law, fighting child domestic labour, and offering comprehensive service packages to other Domestic Workers. Most importantly, in the future the NGO’s plan is to be an accredited and reliable agency for people to employ Domestic Workers. The researcher had the chance to attend the series of

capacity building programme and see the positive change in the Domestic Workers personalities, leadership and communication skills. Through the programme they formed a network and they are able to stay in touch until today, 2 years after the end of the programme. The NGO is able to provide support for other Domestic Workers; the NGO acts as a recruitment agency by helping Domestic Workers find work, at the same time, it provides legal support to Domestic Workers if needed.

#### *Domestic Workers Union “Monthly Paid Women’s Workers”*

The Union was established in September 2012 by 250 Domestic Works. The initial name of the Syndicate was “Domestic Workers Syndicate”, and for an unknown reason the name was changed to “Monthly Paid Women Workers” (Masrwy News, September 2012). In his words on the establishment of the Syndicate Project Manager at the EACPC Mr. Abdel Monem Mansour states, “We are working to claim a documented contract between worker and employer, and we are working on a special law for Domestic Workers and we will wait for the next parliament to submit a draft law to ensure the protection of those marginalized rights, especially after the ILO convention on decent work for Domestic Workers which has not been signed by Egypt or any other Arab country”. He continues the “responsibility falls on the union to change the negative social image of Domestic Workers by raising community awareness on the problem of the worker feeling ashamed from her job and having to hide it from the society around her, in addition working on coordinating the available job opportunities through offices trained and equipped so as to ensure a safe environment for the worker, as well as the prevention and criminalization of child labor and prevent the exploitation of Domestic Workers” (Al-Ahram Al Shabab News, September 2012). The syndicate seems to be continuing the work and negotiations with the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration as well as getting few media attention.

What is apparent about those two entities is the *lack of coordination*, both the NGO and the Union were supported by CSOs working on women's issues but cooperation on the issue seems to be lacking. It was expected that the Union, which was established after the NGO, to have approached the NGO and coordinated the work or the other way around, but this is not the case. This lack of coordination to large extent falls on the CSOs as the supporting bodies of the process. Thus, this constitutes a challenge to Domestic Workers; at this point all efforts should be united. From the experience of Kenya, the success of the KUDHEIHA lied in its ability to form alliances with groups that could provide support, and approaching the government as a powerful group "The KUDHEIHA built alliances with various institutions in its campaign activities. These included; estate associations, civil society, religious institutions like churches and mosques, established women groups in the community. Domestic Workers actively participate in marking of various International events aligned with human and workers' rights." (Organizing Domestic Workers in Kenya, 2012).

With the existence of bodies such as the Domestic Workers Union, the Domestic Workers NGO there is a good chance for concerned civil society organizations and women's groups to support those bodies in organizing and calling for their rights. The call for comprehensive protective measures for Domestic Workers is necessary at this stage for Egypt to comply with its international commitments as well as ensure that measures are taken to fulfill the constitution articles with regards to protection of workers' rights and the advancement of women's rights. Egypt has very strong base of civil society, legislative experts, international organizations and enthusiastic youth groups that can support the advancement of Domestic Workers rights. Examples from Brazil and Kenya prove that the right ways of pressure, lobbying and organizing can bring about change for the better, it is also important to note that their experiences show that change does not happen over night, it takes years of

effort, coordination and pressure. Although the newly established bodies whether the Domestic Workers Union or NGO lack experience and resources, with the right kind of support and alliances, they can achieve so much.

This chapter provided information available on Domestic Workers in Egypt, with some reflections on the general political context and the latest developments on the issue and what can be achieved. The fact that there are now two bodies established and managed by Domestic Workers for the first time in Egypt is a great step forward. There is still a lot of work that needs to be done; efforts from CSOs as well as international organizations such as the UN Women and the ILO are highly needed at this stage despite the unstable political environment. From Kenya “organization of Domestic Workers can occur in the challenging environment of a developing country even though it is still striving to meet its citizens’ basic needs. In fact, the Union argues that by improving the welfare of workers in the informal sector, the country’s international rating will improve.” (Organizing Domestic Workers in Kenya, 2012). In this chapter the researcher’s aim was to pave the way for the next chapter, which is the results of the fieldwork done. It was particularly important to provide an overview of the general context in which the fieldwork was done and analyzed. As shown there are no statistics or data on the size and conditions of Domestic Workers in Egypt and this has impacted the representation of Domestic Workers on the many levels. The invisibility of this sector at the macro-economic level necessitates that the rising efforts should advocate for the importance of this work and how it contributes to the overall production of the state.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter is dedicated to presenting the findings of the fieldwork. The main aim of the findings in this research is to explore the multidimensional problem of Domestic Workers in Egypt with a focus on Domestic Workers living in slum communities in Greater Cairo. The first section of the chapter will be to put the reader into the context of the research including the political and socio-economic environment. The second section will be to present the data collected in relation to the key questions of the research, and to present the different point of views of the respondents. The third section will provide analysis of this data vis-à-vis the hypothesis of the thesis, pointing out the gaps existing in the issue, and how the theoretical framework presented in the Chapters 2 and 3 apply or not in partial or in whole and why. Examples of real-life cases that came out of the interviews and focus group discussions are provided to enable the reader to learn more about the living conditions of many Domestic Workers in Egypt.

The hypothesis of this thesis is *Collective action by Domestic Workers, supported by post-revolution feminist and political organizations will lead to their recognition and improvement of their working conditions through equitable and gender sensitive public policies.*

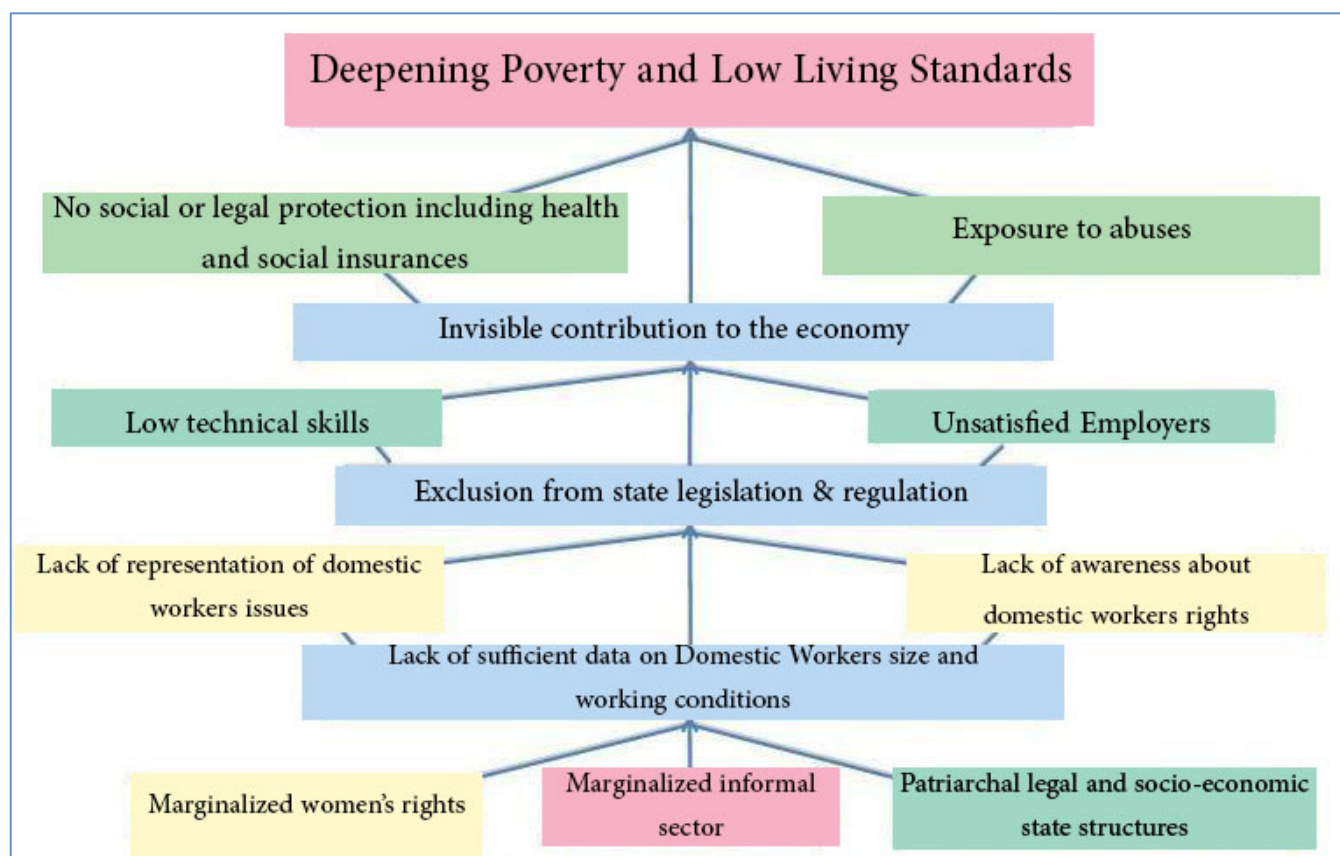


Figure 3 Observations and findings from the Egyptian context

Figure (3) intend to show the different elements that are interlinked and play a huge role in the situation of Domestic Workers with the end result being deepening poverty and low living standards. The results displayed in the diagram explains that the problems of domestic workers are mainly due to the patriarchal social and economic structure that the state is shaped and operated according to, and how this eventually affects how they are perceived and dealt with on the different levels (they are invisible).

## Background

Before the 25<sup>th</sup> of January uprising in 2011, oppression and poverty had reached their peak in Egypt, freedom of associations and union formation were none existing, syndicates and the women's rights movement were crouched on by the state. Any gains for women in Egyptian laws would be



called *Suzan's Law*, Egypt's first lady Mubarak's wife. After the revolution with its three slogans bread, freedom and social justice, an upheaval or at least an attempted one was expected by what we can call *marginalized populations*. By marginalized population the research indicates to any group that were not part of political processes and their needs were only taken into consideration if it serves the political interests of the regime, this description can be applied to the poor living in slum communities, women and youth. If the current situation is to be assessed, 3 years from the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, political struggles have been occupying the scene, while very little attention has given to poverty alleviation and social protection. Moreover, women's issues have been given considerable attention especially after the overthrowing of the Muslim Brotherhood from power, but they are yet to materialize into effective actions. The situation cannot be foreseen, the current government is only temporary and there is a limit to what it can do, except support the kick-start of initiatives to continue working even after it is gone. That is why, the efforts that would be done by Domestic Workers themselves in organizing with the support of civil society and women's groups is more sustainable and can achieve many gains on the long run. Investing in the power of a group like Domestic Workers will help them gain their rights and the rights of generations to come.

Due to the difficulty of having access to Domestic Workers who would be willing to be interviewed, the researcher resorted to the support of two NGOs Al Shehab Foundation for Comprehensive Development and the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (EASER). The two NGOs already have programmes running with Domestic Workers, and were able to get me the 21 Domestic Workers the researcher covered in this research. It is important to note that the Domestic Workers respondents are part of the capacity building programmes managed by the two NGOs.

The fieldwork with the Domestic Workers was conducted in Ezbet el Hagganna and Helwan. Ezbet el Hagganna is a poor neighborhood, where most of the residents do not have access to basic services such as electricity, water and decent sanitation. According to Ms. Reda Shukry, Executive Director of Al Shehab, Ezbet el Hagganna is the 14<sup>th</sup> largest slum area worldwide with 1,200,000 people living on it, 46% of the women residing in El Hagganna are heads of households; most of them work at the informal sector, with many as Domestic Workers. As for Helwan and vicinity, it is not as poor as Ezbet el Hagganna; however, lack of sufficient basic services also characterize the area.

### **Situation of Domestic Workers in Egypt**

#### *No existing data on size and working conditions*

A primary finding of this research is that there is no sufficient data on this group despite the fact that they represent millions of women across Egypt and million of households supported for that matter. Domestic Workers are not well represented in research, public dialogue and on political agenda or women rights advocates work in Egypt. There are two reason for the exclusion of Domestic Workers from the political agenda, thus, lack of state protection: a) the informal sector is completely ignored by the government and policy makers b) the women's rights movement is highly middle class, thus, what is put on the agenda will mostly represent the middle class interest. It could be argued that after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, poverty alleviation projects, awareness programmes and voluntary work by the youth have indeed targeted marginalized groups including women working in the informal sector. According to Ms. Dina Wahba, Women's Rights Advocate and Member of the Women's Secretariat in the Social Democratic Party "It is not that simple, there are a lot of effort being done to improve the conditions of marginalized groups such as women working in the informal sector, but lets say that the lack of diversification in the women's rights movements, could have an

influence on what is put on the women's rights agenda". This means that if we wish to see the issues of Domestic Workers to see daylight, there has to be a push from the women's movement and others concerned with improving the conditions of groups working in the informal sector. The growth of the informal sector is not temporary, it became a fact, and although it became a fact it is not counted in national statistics and is not recognized as impacting the macro economy.

### *An Outdated Legislation and A Weak State*

Domestic Workers are not only specifically excluded from the labour law as shown earlier, they are also excluded from the Social Insurance Law 79 of 1975 which is considered the complementary backbone of the social legislation in Egypt. The 2003 Labour Law, Article 4 has excluded "Domestic Workers and the *like*" from the labour law clauses, by the "like", the law meant any individual working on the premises of the home such as the Gardner or the Cook. As such, Law 79 of 1975 Social Insurance Law was issued to include the *like* in mentioned in the Labour Law and again exclude Domestic Workers. The reasons for exclusion were even put forth by Ministerial decree no. 149 issued in 1976 concerning identifying the workers inside the homes that are not included under the law and the exclusion of Domestic Workers was provided on 2 conditions: 1) That the address of practicing the profession would be at a home that is considered a private residency, 2) The work performed is manual to serve the personal needs of the employer and his family. It was not until 1980 that the legislation decided to finally include them under the umbrella of the Social Insurance Law. Despite the inclusion, Domestic Workers still faced a problem; Domestic Work is not among the job classifications of the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration, and they are excluded from the labour law, which means that *Domestic Work* cannot be written as the profession on their National IDs or any official documents which defeats the inclusion. Furthermore, the reasons for

exclusion of the profession in the Egyptian Labour Law were: 1) it operates in private space which imply an intimate relationship that the state should not take part in, 2) the state cannot consider the household as the employer in the formal sense of owner of a shop or manager of a company, thus he/she cannot bear taxes of insurance expenses of the Domestic Worker working for the home. The exclusion of Domestic Workers from the Egyptian legislation has put Egypt on the Black List of ILO for violation of workers' rights as well as exclusion of marginalized sectors from its protection.

Some further explanations as to why Domestic Workers are excluded till this date is that the current legislations were fit to a certain social context that no longer exists “the current legislation is associated with a previous social context, where only rich families would have domestic help, and the Domestic Workers were considered members of the family and would be permanent residents inside the homes. Now the situation have changed, Domestic Work has become a wide spread ‘profession’ that requires new set of policies to accommodate the current circumstances ”, said Ms. Mona Ezzat, Journalist and member of the New Woman Organization. The fact that Domestic Work operates in private space poses a challenge for employing monitoring mechanisms Mr. Mohammad Naem, Social Democratic Party “The government does not have the capacity to penetrate the private space, and this is because we are a weak state”. The fact that the labour law specifically excludes Domestic Workers from its clauses, putting the blame on the privacy of homes and the inconveniency of putting monitoring mechanisms for the profession might indicate the state’s refusal to deal with the issue due to its complex structure. The respondents further confirmed this, for example, Ms. Reda Shukry Executive Director of Al Shehab states “any profession that the society stigmatizes, you will find it hard for it to obtain its rights and be regulated. Moreover, it is often that the concerned sector are the ones who stigmatize themselves, they do not admit that they are Domestic Workers”. This indicates that in many cases the laws reflect the social context.

Inclusion in the *current* labour law might actually do more harm than good to these workers. Domestic Workers enjoy high flexibility, are not tied by binding contracts and working hours, are not subject to taxes, they can leave work any time they want, unlike employees in formal sectors. “Regulation and inclusion in the law should be on consultative basis, the government should conduct research with Domestic Workers to see what would fit for them” Ms. Dina Wahba mentioned. From the perspective of the employers interviewed, regulation for the profession was something really important “to ensure the commitment of the Domestic Worker to doing the work and decrease theft incidents even if the cost of the worker will be a bit higher”. So employers think that regulation is a must mostly to protect their interests, on the other hand Domestic Workers needs for a regulation were completely different. In the focus group discussions, most Domestic Workers mentioned protection for them is health insurances, pensions, social insurance, compensations in cases of injury and legal support in case of abuses inside the workplace. From the words of a Domestic Worker “When one of us is sick or breaks a leg, no one compensates her for the unworked sick days, if she is sick for a month, this means no income for a month”. If we combine the problems and needs of both the Domestic Workers and employers, we will find that regulation needs a careful look into the issue. Regulation will not just be mere inclusion in the law; the legislation should be constructed based on the needs of the sector including employers, with feasible monitoring and applicable mechanisms.

#### Recruitment Offices or Trafficking Shops?

Recruitment offices constitute a major source of trafficking in persons in Egypt. Domestic Workers and employers interviewed in this research mentioned that they would never seek recruitment through the recruitment offices that exist. The researcher did not get the chance to interview any of the recruitment offices, however, almost all respondents provided negative opinions

about the offices. The recruitment offices are mostly unregistered, known for the bad reputation. “The recruitment office might send you to work in a home as a Domestic Worker, but then you find that you were sent to do something else”, these words come from a Domestic Worker who is aware that some recruitment offices are also brokers of trafficking women into prostitution. It is important to note that the recruitment offices take a huge percentage from the Domestic Worker’s salary before sending her to the house of the employer. Ms. Reda Shukry mentioned that “The recruitment offices are mostly handled by *men*, and they are the ones taking the Domestic Worker’s money, recruiting her in houses that are not safe at all and she is mostly exposed to all forms of violations, however, the stigma still lies on her at the end and not him”. This is particularly very important and reflects the battles that Domestic Workers face in their careers, many are trafficked into the profession, some of which are exposed to all kinds of abuses with no protection and it is mainly because of men who work as brokers that they go through these experiences, yet all of the blame falls on their shoulders.

On the other hand, employers mentioned that they would never seek the help of a recruitment office because they are unreliable and take huge commissions, and if there is any dispute with the worker they take no responsibility. This confirms what has been said earlier that offices are there to conduct a very profitable business; they neither care about a good service nor about the rights of the employer. Their relation with the worker ends with her departure to the home, and with the employer once they take their commission.

### **The Consequences of State Exclusion: Exploring the Profile of Domestic Worker in Greater Cairo**

Findings about Domestic Workers conditions were from the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews with Domestic Workers, on the other hand, further information about Domestic Workers

problems were taken from interviews with psychologists and lawyers who work in the CSOs' programmes that support the Domestic Workers.

### Socio-Economic Profiles

On a morning in Ezbet el Haggana, on Al Shehab premises, the female Domestic Workers have just finished their literacy class and entered the room where the researcher was anxiously waiting to convene the first focus group discussions. All of them have not completed their education, some dropped out after primary school and others at prep school. The literacy classes are part of Al Shehab's capacity building project for the Domestic Workers who recently joined the Domestic Workers NGO, "Helpers". Domestic Workers who participated in the focus groups and interviews in Helwan also receive literacy classes, as they are also school dropouts.

Total Domestic Workers respondents who participated in the focus groups discussions and interviews in Ezbet el Haggana and Helwan are 21 Domestic Workers, below are some information about their socio-economic profiles.

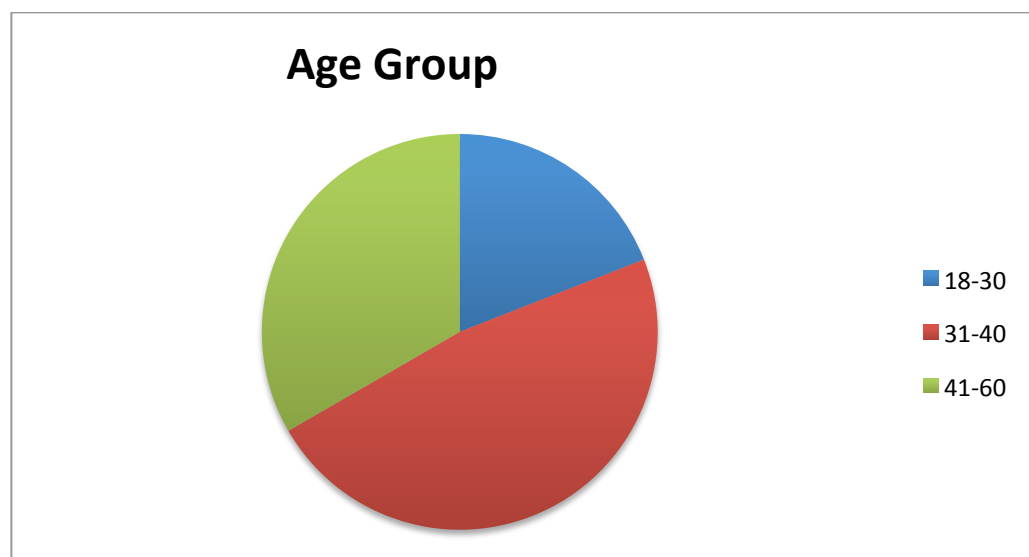
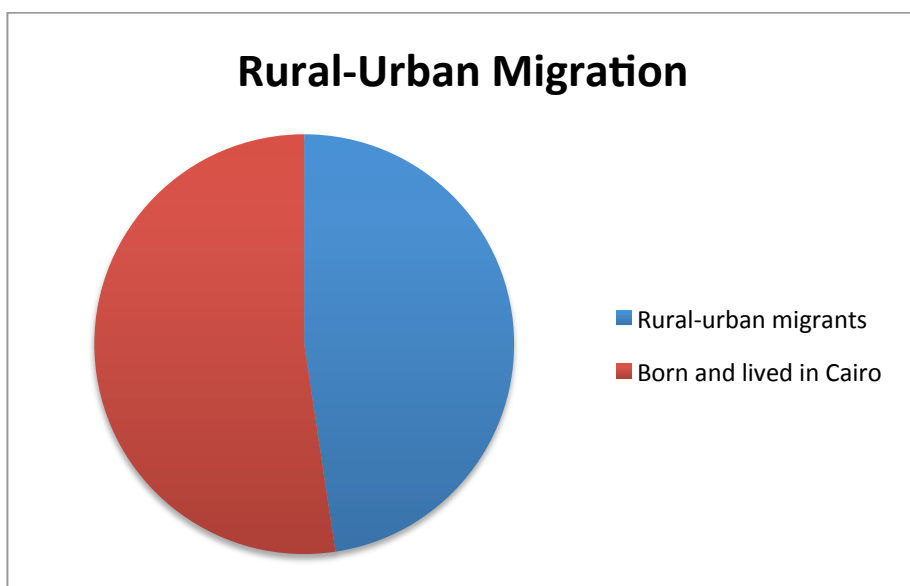


Figure 4: Age Group of Domestic Worker Respondents



Figure 5: Respondents Year of Work

Respondents with the 1-3 years of work in Domestic Work indicated that they have joined the sector after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011 revolution, and this is due to the degraded economic conditions that forced them to work to support their husbands in family expenses. Soad who is a cook mentions, “After the revolution I had to find work, my husband’s income was no longer sufficient for our home and children expenses”. Domestic Workers who have 11 years of work and above, started at very young age mostly at the age of 15 years old, and have been in the profession since.





Almost half of the respondents are rural-urban migrants, and the most of them reside in Ezbet el Haggana, while none of the respondents from Helwan are rural-urban migrants. The rural migrants came to Cairo seeking work, and due to their low skills and educational levels, men would resort to working as casual workers as; construction workers, driver, carpenters, blacksmith etc. Few have mentioned that their husbands work as employees in private sector companies. On the other hand, Domestic Work was one of the only survival strategies for rural-urban migrant women, as most respondents mentioned that the husbands' incomes are never enough.

### *The Daily Routine*

The in-depth interviews showed that Domestic Workers have the same paradox of many the workingwomen in Egypt (who hire Domestic Workers to spare them the burden); they have to work and at the same time bear all household responsibilities. The respondents confirmed that the average hours spent by the worker inside the workplace and her house is over 10 hours. In some instances workers said that they could spend 10 hours only at the workplace, then come home also to continue housework that is not finished. When asked to narrate her daily routine, Manal Ibrahim, 40 years old, from Helwan, says that she usually wakes up at 6 am, wakes up her children to get ready for school, do the needed house chores and then leave to work, "it depends on the needed work at the apartments, I usually arrive at 9 am, sometimes I finish at the 4 pm, and other times I can stay until 8 pm, I do not have specific working hours I only leave once the house is clean". It seems that what the Domestic Worker does for living helps other women with their careers, however, they have no one to do the same for them; they take care of other people's homes and theirs. Interviews and focus group discussions with other Domestic Workers involved similar stories confirming the unregulated working hours.

Some Domestic Workers have to take up till 3 transportations to get to their work destination; first they have to ride the “Tuktuks” to get them out of their area, then they might ride 2 or more minibuses to get to work. Their situation represents millions of Egyptian with low incomes and cannot afford a better means of commuting, and the fact that they are women, makes them more vulnerable to harassment and insecurity if they leave work late at night. It is a hectic routine to go through everyday, taking sole responsibility of their house, inhumane means of transportation, job that they do not necessarily like and an inferior look from society.

#### *The Job: Choice, Wages, and Worker-Employer relationship*

It is really important to acknowledge the fact that *choice* is a luxury that Domestic Workers cannot afford, as stated earlier, they are pushed into the profession only to generate income, they are mostly illiterate, poor, and have no skills. Domestic Work is thus one of their few survival strategies if they wish to provide for themselves and their families. Most Domestic Workers admitted that Domestic Work is the only thing they can do, because what they do in their homes, they apply it in others' homes and get paid for that. Almost all respondents have also mentioned that they prefer not working and it is the need for a source of income that drives them to work in this profession. Furthermore, in one of the focus groups, respondents mentioned that if they were offered another profession that would get them the same or a higher wage, they would definitely leave domestic service. This is reflected in the employers' response about the quality of Domestic Workers in Egypt, from lack of commitment, carelessness about household items, unwillingness to do everything she is asked to do and disrespect to the employer at times. It could be argued that the reactions of the Domestic Worker during performing her work at others homes is just a reflection of the Domestic Workers perception about the profession and why she is doing it in the first place. *She is not doing it*

*to reach her potential or expand her set of professional skills like most professions, she is doing it because she has no skills, no other option and these are the only motives for her work.*

It is important to note that daily wages for Domestic Workers is a really complex issue and not possible to identify except through a survey that covers all Egyptian governorates, the wages mentioned by the Domestic Workers in the focus groups in the research reflect a very specific group who mostly work for middle class homes and thus do not represent by any means the average wage of Domestic Workers in Egypt or even Cairo. During the focus groups, some mentioned that the daily wage they earn for baby-sitting is 70 EGP, and for cleaning a 240 square meters it could reach EGP150 per day. Again this is reflection of a specific group of Domestic Workers who work with homes of specific standards.

Domestic Workers mentioned the job itself is not that hard; it is the people they deal with in their jobs that are sometimes difficult to deal with. Domestic Workers mentioned that the abuses they face at work could be simply the inferior treatment that they receive from their employers. 18 years old Marwa mentioned that some employers look down at her saying things like “do not compare yourself to us, you are just a maid”. The literature covered on migrant Domestic Workers from (Anderson (2001), Ahmed 2003...etc.) and the experience from Brazil show that migrant Domestic Workers might face racism based on their color and ethnic backgrounds, the racism that Egyptian Domestic Workers might face is gender and class racism. Many mentioned that not all employers treat them bad, they even mentioned sometimes they would receive lower remuneration than they expect in a certain house, but they really did not care as long as they are well treated by the employer. What Domestic Workers indicate here is that the situation is highly circumstantial; there is not anything that regulates the relation between the workers and the employer, mistreatment can happen from both sides and no standards exist to regulate the relationship.

Mr. Naem, Social Democratic Party, has given an interesting description to the Domestic Worker-employer relationship; he describes it as an unhealthy and unprofessional relationship. He further mentions that especially in cases of live-in Domestic Workers he mentions that it is sometimes the idea of “Sponsorship”, “lifting this person from poverty to give her a better life and offer her security” and this notion in itself gives the employer an advantage over the worker. On the other hand, Mr. Naem mentions that Egypt has a work ethics problem, wages are not measured by the physical effort done, while in Western countries, construction workers and Domestic Workers receive one of the highest wages due to the physical effort they exert.

*Trust* is an essential ingredient in this profession maybe the most important one, the worker need to trust the home that she is working in and the employer need to trust the worker with the household. The nature of this profession has definitely affected the characteristics of the workers as well as the perception of the employer. The fact that this profession occurs in the home allows the worker to get to know intimate details about the household, and feel as a member of the home. In cases of live-in Domestic Workers, employers mentioned that indeed their Domestic Worker is part of the family, others with live-out Domestic Workers mentioned that they highly trust their Domestic Worker. One employer mentioned that she has known her Domestic Worker for over 10 years “her performance has declined, she does not do everything I want her to do, her cleaning is not as good as it used to be, but I do not care as long as she is trustful, I mean, I trust her with my house keys while I am travelling to enter the home and finish the work”. This perception is also something confirmed by Domestic Workers as mentioned earlier, they would accept a lower wage in return for a good treatment and trust in the house, and at the same time, the employer will compromise on the standard of work done by the employer as long as she is trustful. While trust is definitely an essential part of most jobs, trust in Domestic Work is indispensable, and once it is shaken the relationship is over.

From the problems mentioned by the employers are that Domestic Workers are always in a hurry, they do not do the work properly, and that they want to finish the tasks with the minimum effort and time. An employer, Riham Sayed, 32 years old, mentioned that one of the things she dislikes about her Egyptian Domestic Worker is that whenever she is asked to do an extra task like helping her in the kitchen, she behaves rudely and sometimes she refuses. During Riham's residency in Kuwait, she had an Indian Domestic Worker and she said she was so obedient, she never said no on any task, and the quality of her work was excellent. Riham also mentioned that her Indian Domestic Worker lived in Kuwait alone, her family was back in India, in addition she worked at Kuwaiti mansions before, so was somewhat trained. If we compare the two situations, the Indian Domestic Worker has all the time because she had no home to come to everyday, unlike the Egyptian Domestic Worker, who had a home to go to, another round of domestic chores that needed to be done, not to mention commuting through 3 transportations just to get home. On the top of that, she never received training of any kind like many of foreign domestics.

One of the very interesting findings that the researcher noticed is that human rights activists and development professionals who are very vocal about workers' and women's rights have changed their attitudes completely when it came to their own Domestic Workers. The positive discussion about the right to decent working conditions for this marginalized sector was not the same discussion when it came to personal experiences with Domestic Workers. They have often said negative statements about their Domestic Workers despite the fact that they realize the struggles that these women go through everyday. The researcher was pleased that this was revealed during the interview because it reflected the big difference between the ideal situation and reality.

### *Coping with Daily Struggles*

Interviews with psychologist, social worker and lawyer who are part of the support to Domestic Workers programme of the NGOs revealed the close relationship between the socio-economic conditions and their effects on the physical and mental well being of the workers. Psychologist Asmaa Gamal has been working on counseling for Domestic Workers for 3 years with Domestic Workers as part of their capacity building programme in Helwan and have witnessed many cases of Domestic Workers with psychological disorders some of which have made it to recovery. Asmaa mentioned that most Domestic Workers play two roles in the family, the father and the mother, and this is because their husbands are not living in the same home for divorce or death or with most cases the husbands are living in the same house but do not work or earn very little income, and do not share any home responsibilities. The end result is that the Domestic Workers bear all family responsibilities, earning income for the family, doing house chores, taking care of the children. Personal burdens are a big source of stress for the workers, adding to that the inferior societal look to her profession, the harassments she might get when people know what she does for living. Those are causes for many Domestic Workers who show signs of depression like constant headaches, low self-esteem, paranoia, being nervous and angry all the time, and this of course reflects on their children and might amount to domestic violence. Psychologist Asmaa stated that there were 4 cases of attempted suicide by Domestic Workers, who could not bear the pressures in their lives anymore. Nevertheless, the unhealthy psyche of the worker as a result of all those pressures reflects on her work abilities, work relationships and family relationships.

Interview with Lawyer Mostafa Farghaly also working for 3 years with Domestic Workers in Helwan pointed out that none of the cases he saw were work related, all the cases that he handled were personal. Personal cases included, pension, alimony, home eviction cases, and divorce cases.

The ex-husband of one of the Domestic Workers forged a death certificate for her, so he can get her pension, when the Domestic Worker found out, she sought the help of the NGO to file a case and she won it. The burden of personal problems that Domestic Worker have also came out in the interviews with the employers. Some mentioned that they disliked that Domestic Workers are talkative one employer mentioned “I had a Domestic Worker who was so talkative, she always complained about her personal life, and I really disliked this, it is none of my business”. What might be an outlet for the Domestic Worker to speak about her own problems and relief her stress is not accepted by the employer and is seen as irrelevant to the work she performs. This also proves that many Domestic Workers have very little outlets to speak about their problems and get advice, which explains psychological disorders that reach attempted suicide. The successful cases reported by the lawyer and psychologist were the ones that sought legal help and got her right, and at the same time received good psychological counseling and medical treatment when needed.

### Gender Structure Imbalance

The customary rules within the Egyptian household similar to many cultures give the man the responsibility of generating income for the family; while women stay at home and take care of household. With the number of women entering the labour force, household responsibilities still fall on the shoulder of women. The majority of men do not fully support their wives or female relatives in household responsibilities and they are taught that this is the normal. “Of course men will be more successful professionally than women in Egypt, they have only one job that they do and have all the energy and time to excel in it, on the other hand, women have the double burden of having to work and at the same time bear all household responsibilities”, Dina Wahba. There is a famous saying which embodies the clearly flawed gender structure within society “Behind every successful man, there is a woman”. If we apply this saying to the Egyptian case, women are taught since their birth

that supporting the men in their lives is one of the most important and maybe the only task that matters for women. Now, if a young women wishes to work, then work should not come in the way of her house duties. Choosing a wife, many men look for women who know how to cook and take good care of the house. Women and men are raised for certain purposes, men should get money and women should stay home and take care of the children and the house. Women participation in the labour force in Egypt is around 22% (EHDR, 2010) and this is could be attributed to the perception of women's work.

During the past years, with the economic situation and thanks to the women's movement, many middle class Egyptian women have entered the labour force, leaving a gap in household production and of course the solution was hiring domestic help. As Andreson (2001) point out, "perhaps managing a Domestic Worker openly is a more attractive option for women than attempting to manage men covertly". This is somewhat true, to avoid who will does what, many women would resort to domestic service to spare them some of their duties forced on them by society.

What is surprising is that in certain low socio-economic classes women became the ones who work and men stay at home but still the upper hand belongs to men in all decision making inside the household, and respondents confirmed this during the interviews and focus groups discussions. Nowadays, women have become heads of households, generate income for their families, however, they have no control over that income or an advantage in the power relations inside the home. They work, their male relatives take the money, and if women resist, many are exposed to violence. During one of the interviews, Nehmedo, a Domestic Worker for over 20 years, rural-urban migrant and head of household, reported that she was subject to violence by her husband, who is unemployed and takes her money and when she refuses he beats her. Nehmedo is in a divorce process but has lived in this situation for over 25 years, and the reasons she wants a divorce is that violence has aggravated; she



mentioned that in the last violent incidents he wanted to hurt her with a knife and that she could not take it anymore “the last days in my life I want to live them in peace”.

Domestic Workers respondents that most men could not be trusted with money, during the focus groups; women mentioned that most men do not know the value of money, while women do. With 50EGP, a woman can do a lot, she will be happy to have earned it, on the other hand men would spend it in one day on trivial things such as cigarettes or on a café or sometimes to buy drugs. Anderson (2001) highlights how migrant Domestic Worker maneuver gender structures to be able to survive; a member of an organization that supports Domestic Worker “Kalayaan” was asked to carry the money for her other Domestic Worker friend back to Sri-Lanka “She was given strict instructions to hand over a small amount to the husband, but to give the bulk to the mother in secret. When she went to the worker's family home she was welcomed by the man in the sitting room, and waited on by mother and other female relatives. He was pleased with the sum given him. The lady then explained that she was going to greet the women in the kitchen, and secretly handed over the rest, to be spent on the children. It seems that migrant work enables women to subvert, but not directly challenge, gender roles”. A study on migrant Domestic Workers by Anderson (2001) showed that they all agree that they do not trust their husbands with their remittance, they mentioned things like: “you can't trust your husband to spend it on the people who need it.” And “He will drink it away” Women agreed that they rely on female networks to spend their remittances wisely, even if they send some money to their husbands to protect their egos. Consensus on this was surprising, given that the group of women I was talking to came from six national groups, from Ivory Coast to the Philippines” (Anderson, 2001 P.29).

Furthermore, respondents mentioned that if men dominated the profession, there would have been a great difference, employers would have been afraid to abuse them in anyway. Female

Domestic Worker are perceived as a vulnerable group, you get rid of them easily, you have more privileges over them, you can get away with not paying them their wages or abusing them.

### **Lack of Work Ethics and Stigma**

One of the findings of this research is the general lack of work ethics in the Egyptian society and it is not related to a certain class or social standard. Employers confirmed that Egyptian Domestic Workers do not have work ethics, and some of them said that they would pay double the salary of their Domestic Worker to cover her insurances provided that she is as qualified and as ethical as the foreign Domestic Workers and they mostly referred to the Indonesians and Filipino workers. The problem of work ethics exist in all professions, development experts have mentioned that many Egyptian factories do not prefer to hire Egyptian workers anymore and have resorted to export manpower from countries like Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi workers are committed, punctual, and efficient while the Egyptians are not up to those levels. It could be argued that the institutional corruption in Egypt, illiteracy and the huge income gaps could be contributing factors to increasing the diminishing work ethics in Egypt. “Low labor quality is a major problem, whether we are talking about skilled or unskilled workers. The reasons for this include Egypt’s poor overall educational system, the lack of practical training for skilled and unskilled workers” (Selim, 2013). While Domestic Workers mentioned that they work ethically in front of God to have earned money with their own sweat, employers expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of work, and ethics of the workers.

Another related factor to the lack of work ethics is the social stigma that workers experience in Domestic Work profession experience. The fact that society stigmatizes Domestic Work despite the fact that without it many households will have a huge gap in household production is a sign that society lacks work ethics. During one of the focus group discussions, one woman mentioned that she

feels ashamed to say that she “works in homes”; no one knows that she is a cook from her network except her husband. She says that I cannot say that I work in homes; I do not want anyone to harass my children at school because of me. The fact that this woman is afraid about the image of her children if someone knew about her job is an indication that society does not know the value of work. Gender Expert Dr. Maya Morsy mentioned, “You have thousands of unemployed young women college graduates and they could work as baby sitters, they are educated and they could be of added value to the children, but because of the lack of work ethics and social stigma, they prefer sitting at home”. This is particularly true, in Europe, baby sitters are well paid and by the hour, they are mostly students or fresh graduates seeking to support themselves through working as baby sitters. Dr. Maya Morsy continues, “one of the problems of Domestic Workers is the mindset of society and that is why, the solution is not only regulation, it is ideational change”

### **Uncoordinated Development Efforts**

The role of civil society as a mediator between the rights of marginalized groups and the government is extremely important. “The large majority of CSOs in Egypt are charitable or services provision organizations. The more politically active development and rights organizations do not account for more than 25 per cent of the total” (29,000 in 2010) (Elagati, 2013). The rights-based organizations with the crucial role have very little resources, and this is the legacy of the Mubarak’s regime, which has always limited their access to local and international funds. After the revolution, Egypt has seen a tremendous flow of foreign aid that entered to support the “democratic transition”, however, the many of the aid resources were political, and it always had specific agendas. “Arguably, there is often a lack of transparency with regard to this kind of funding across the region. A series of financial scandals affecting politicians and political parties in a number of countries, including Egypt, have led to drastic views on foreign political funding. Many regard it with suspicion as a potential

means for foreign conspiracies unduly to influence domestic political decision-making” (Elagati, 2013).

On the other hand, it could be argued that even the ‘non-politicized’ aid is also not seeking to have real impact on economic and social development, but rather visibility and prestige. The proof of this is that over the years millions of dollars went to civil society and other international agencies, however, Egypt’s conditions on all levels are still status quo it even got worse. Of course there are a lot of other reasons to the degradation but *uncoordinated foreign aid* is one of them. Egypt receives millions of dollars from foreign aid that is directed to development programmes from the European Union (EU), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Canadian Fund, Japanese Fund, Swedish Fund and others. The surprising thing is that we find different CSOs or international agencies doing the same programmes and sometimes within the same geographical areas, and this gives the impression that donors do not seek to build on existing efforts. The fact that there are now two bodies working on Domestic Workers rights, “Helpers” and the Domestic Workers Union and they are not connected in anyway has two scenarios: 1) the donor that supported the funding for the establishment of the union has not done good research to realize that there is already efforts being done with the Domestic Workers NGO, 2) the CSO that supported the establishment of the Union has not approached the already existing NGO to cooperate. The two scenarios indicate a lack of coordinated efforts and take away the aim of why the development business exists in the first place. Another feature of foreign aid is that it has themes, so instead of attending to the communities real needs, NGOs and international human rights organization need to tailor programmes that fit the themes of the donors. For example, there is a trend now for funding violence against women programmes, while other very important portfolios such as economic empowerment received little attention. There are indeed programmes that have real impact but their numbers are very few,

research and accumulation of efforts are things that are missing in the Egyptian development business.

### **Proposed solutions: Collective Action, Regulation, and Ideational Change**

One of the main aims of this research is to provide the proposed solutions to the problem of Domestic Workers according to the fieldwork done with Domestic Workers, gender experts, activists, and development practitioners. My initial hypothesis assumed that organization of Domestic Workers and alliance with women's rights group is the most feasible way to achieve gender sensitive public policies that will adopt decent work standards. The proposed solutions included four main interlinked elements: organization through coordination, leading to regulation with ideational change going in parallel. It makes sense that regulation is the first step to achieve the needed objectives, but the outcome of the fieldwork proved that regulation happens only when there is pressure on the government to good sound regulation in place. The pressure of course is through collective action by Domestic Workers with the support of CSOs and women's rights groups.

#### *Collective Action*

Organizing Domestic Workers, although has proven successful with the Domestic Workers NGO and the Union, is also problematic, and Domestic Workers who are members of "Helpers" voiced this during focus group discussions. "The rate of participation in the activities of the NGO has been decreasing and increasing there is not much stability and this is because some cannot afford to skip work or leave their homes after work to come attend meetings and activities of the NGO". This is where the role of CSOs should come to give the first push until the situation is clear and Domestic Workers have the ability to operate on their own, and this is what is happening now clearly with "Helpers". Collective action is key, Domestic Workers should be able to independently form alliances and networks and mobilize their constituencies. This is particularly important because collective

action means that the group which has the concern is the one working and defending themselves, and this is much stronger than just organization of the group which will always make civil society at the front fostering the actions of the Domestic Workers. Organization is important at earlier stages and this is happening now with “Helpers” the NGOs are supporting helpers in establishing a management unit, as well as, the support to offer direct services to other Domestic Workers outside the NGO as a way to mobilize more constituencies. With the support of the NGOs, “Helpers” was able to approach the government and gain public attention. One of the results of those efforts, the MOME has categorized the profession through issuing eight criteria of measuring skills under Domestic Work as a first step to regulate the profession. The eight criteria include: Baby sitting, Housekeeping, Cleaning, Elderly care, Patient care, Special needs care, Nursing and Cooking. This was a result of meetings, roundtables, events and consultations, which Domestic Workers took part in and were able to voice their needs to the government. This initial change would not have been possible if the government has not seen Domestic Workers has a collective group with clear goals acting as “one”. Thanks to the work of the concerned NGOs and UN entities that has supported this initiative that this was possible, however, it is not enough more work and pressure is needed to make the government continue the work.

From country experience, what has made the experience of Kenya successful is the ability of the Domestic Workers union to collectively link with other women groups and organizations that can support them in on way or another. During an interview with a political party member, he mentioned that it is very important that Domestic Workers organize themselves first before the party can give them any support, as they will be the best to call for their rights and needs. He confirmed further that the initial support should come from the CSOs. Domestic Workers through the support the CSOs

should establish links with other unions, women's groups, journalists and even public figures to bring their cause on the scene, to create a public dialogue and create awareness.

On the other hand, the role of donors and UN entities is crucial; there should be effective coordination that ensures the funds and programmes are based on the already existing initiatives with ensuring that CSOs are indeed working collaboratively. Investing in research that produces accredited evidence based knowledge about the size and conditions of Domestic Workers is necessary when addressing policy change. In addition, support programmes can include the establishment of a training center for the different job categories that come under Domestic Work. The training center can be accredited by the MOME to have qualified and trained Domestic Workers and this will enable them to get higher wages. Most employers mentioned that they would prefer to have Egyptian Domestic Workers as they speak the language and understand the culture. So this gives an advantage for Domestic Workers already and investing in them as a group will increase their employability.

#### Regulation & Accountability Framework

Approaching policy makers can come in different forms, most importantly, as Dr. Maya Morsy indicated "in approaching policy makers, CSOs and other concerned stakeholders should come with two things: 1) description of the existing problem 2) a viable solution". Evidence-based research should be produced as to inform policy makers and the community about the size of the existing problem. It is then decisions will be based on available knowledge and resources to and access to the affected sector and this is the importance of the accountability framework. This was one of the ways that made the Kenyan experience somewhat successful. On the other hand producing viable solutions that will benefit all stakeholders including the government is also crucial. For example, the Egyptian government already acts as a mediator between foreign Domestic Workers and diplomats and

ambassadors who are in need for domestic service. The process goes as follows, the employer seeking domestic service develops a Terms of Reference and hands it to the government, the government checks on the availability and sends the most suitable foreign Domestic Worker, who has a contract enforced by the sending country. The Egyptian government in turn takes administrative fees for offering this job matching service. Now if this is applied to Egyptian Domestic Workers, of course they will have to be as trained as the foreign ones, in this regard establishing a training center for skills should not cost that much, and this is where donors and CSOs could come in to provide funding and technical support. There can be recruitment offices that are free but under state supervision, and the state can benefit by taking administrative fees for facilitating the service. On the other hand, employers will trust these offices and will be encouraged to deal with them, and most importantly Domestic Workers will be skilled and referenced.

There is a risk that regulation will not be accepted by many of the Egyptian middle class including government employees themselves, who benefit from the flexibility and cheapness of the service, that come from the informality. The role of the institutional body of Domestic Workers is thus very important to constantly push for improvement of their conditions; reluctance of some stakeholders to regulate is expected, and that is why advocacy and pressure are long-term strategies that need to be adopted by organized Domestic Workers with the support of CSOs and other partners.

There are certain standards set by the *ILO in the Guide on Designing Labour Laws (2012)*, which should be taken into consideration when working on regulation:

- “Taking into account the specific nature of the employment and the areas that require particular attention which are: protection from abuse, harassment and violence, gender-based pay discrimination, maternity protection and measures to facilitate the balancing of work and



family responsibilities, however;

- The use of gender-neutral terminology in statutory language to ensure equality in access and application of the Law;
- Formalizing the employment relationships;
- Setting working time standards including (Normal working hours, overtime, rest period and breaks, night work, standby work and leaves)
- Setting minimum wage and protection of wage
- Ensuring fundamental principles at work: freedom of association and promotion of collective bargaining
- Eradication of forced labour and Child Labour” (ILO, Guide to Designing Labour Laws, 2012)

The role of all stakeholders including CSOs, women’s groups, donors, UN entities, *Femocrats*<sup>2</sup>, is crucial for implementation and promotion of regulation, the below diagram explains the idea of regulation and how it could be structured and implemented.

One of most important thing about regulation is that it should be consultative with involved stakeholders including Domestic Workers and their employers. Policy should be reached based on international standards of decent work for Domestic Workers as well as satisfaction of employers. However, taking into account the challenge of the patriarchal state structures, here is where collective action of Domestic Workers comes in to mobilize, negotiate, shape and pressure how the process goes.

### Ideational Change

Cultural perceptions about gender roles and structure are one of the main challenges to Domestic Workers revealed from the fieldwork as well as in the literature review. Cultural change is

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<sup>2</sup> Femocrats is a term used to describe feminists who hold senior positions in government bureaucracy.

one of the most problematic areas especially when it comes to gender and women's rights. "Cultural understandings and ideological preferences about gender relations...have shaped welfare states since their origins" (Padamsee, 2009). It has been widely agreed especially by gender scholars that policy change cannot happen without cultural change hand in hand; "Perhaps the most profound influences of culture arise from its embeddedness in the institutions, routines, purposes, and language of policy making" (Padamasee, 2009). There is a need to disassociate Domestic Work from the natural roles of women, in order to realize paid Domestic Work as a profession like any other profession with a full formal structure. Changing ideas about gender structure of work ethics is one of the hardest but promising things that can be done to improve Domestic Workers' positioning in policy and society. Alliance with the Media and spreading awareness through campaigns, research and other influential in reaching out for the general public is highly needed for initiating change of ideas about gender roles and Domestic Work.

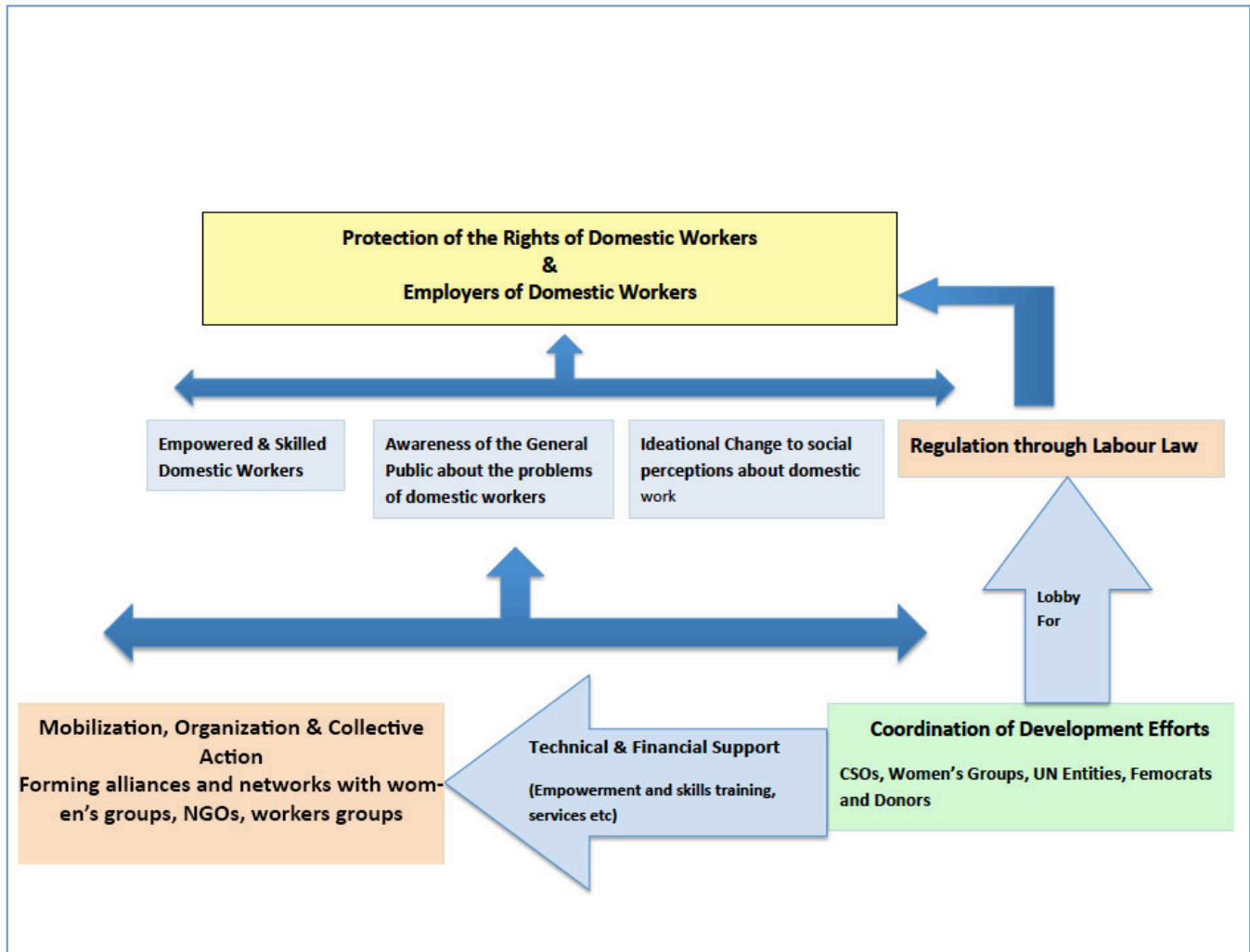


Figure 6 Recommendation for action including the key actors

This chapter was dedicated to presenting the fieldwork done by the researcher to get a deeper understanding about the structure and cultural perceptions about Domestic Work in the Egyptian society. The fieldwork has revealed that Domestic Work carries many meanings of class, gender, and politics that could not have been explored except through qualitative research methods. The findings of the fieldwork have not only highlighted that the problem lies with the lack of an existing protective policy, it lies with a patriarchal and classist social structure that are reflected in policymaking and employment relationships. The chapter began by analyzing the possible root causes for the exclusion of Domestic Workers from state protection and this was manifested in the lack of data on their size

and working conditions, the outdated legislation and the weak state performance to protect this category, the social stigma that accompanies the worker and the reputation of the recruitment offices which are known for being channels of trafficking as well.

With these circumstances the focus group discussions and interviews with the Domestic Workers working and living in Cairo revealed that the profile of the workers is a very important factor, it is how the profile of the worker affects and is affected by the profession in so many ways. Poor women with very low skills are pushed into the profession because it is the only job that they can do, on the other hand, the job is associated with poor, uneducated, and unclean women who are discriminated against because of those reasons. This of course reflects how the poor in general are marginalized socially, economically and politically. The focus group discussions and interviews provided a deeper insight into the lives of Domestic Workers, how they cope with their daily struggles, the different challenges they face at the work place and at home and how this is reflected on their health and thus affecting their working capabilities, noting that the capital of the Domestic Worker is her physical strength and when this is harmed, her source of income is finished. The findings of the fieldwork have shown very interesting results on the gender structure and changes that are happening in the society. Women acknowledge the fact that they are performing the role that they have known all their lives to be the men's role, which is providing income. It is actually revealed that in many cases the role is switched and men are the ones staying at home and the women are the ones providing for the family. There is one problem; the men still have the upper hand when it comes to power relations within the home, and this is causing instability to original social structure, which has existed for centuries.

In this chapter the researcher sought to take the issue from a broader perspective by taking the opinions of gender and development experts who acknowledge the absence of sufficient mechanisms

that deals with issue from a holistic approach. One of the very important findings is the uncoordinated development effort, especially donor funding in building on existing initiatives rather than providing random support. The chapter provides some recommendations for making possible progress taking into account the current context of Egypt. The importance of collective action at this stage is crucial for the Domestic Workers to be able to put pressure and have real impact on policy making and eventually make progress at the legislative levels. On the other hand, awareness raising and the role of civil society is extremely important to work in parallel.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

Conducting research about Domestic Work and Domestic Workers proved that is a complex issue that needs a holistic approach to resolving the multifaceted problems within it. Chapter 1 of this research gave an introduction to the subject; it provided the ILO definitions of Domestic Work and Domestic Workers according, a narrower definition of Domestic Workers in Cairo and an overview of the circumstances they are working in. It also included how a brief on the variables elements that interplay to affect the political and socio-economic outlook of Domestic Work and Domestic Workers; these variables are gender, patriarchy, poverty and migration (focusing on rural-urban migration in Cairo). It includes the methodology of the research, which is divided into: Secondary research, empirical research and participant observation and a brief description of the short movie developed to reflect the fieldwork done.

Chapter 2 covers the literature done on the issue from economic and social perspectives; the capitalist division of labour has historically impacted the work of women especially within the household. How the isolation of women from the public sphere confirmed the notion of female incapacity, which is still use until today to confirm and sustain the subordination of women is societies. In addition, the literature review demonstrated the global overview of the Domestic Work, the feminization of the profession, the challenges and violations, and the recent developments such as the ILO 189 Conventions on the right of Domestic Workers an how this is considered a breakthrough for Domestic Workers around the world. An overview of country practices: Brazil and Kenya were provided for the sake of showing how the issue is dealt with within different cultural contexts and state structures stressing on the processes of gaining rights in each of the countries. Since this research is on Egypt, it was indeed important to highlight the general context of the region in which

Egypt is situated and operating in. The Arab region is characterized by lack of mechanisms by which Domestic Work is coordinated properly and Domestic Workers are protected. Not to mention the documented violations of Domestic Workers especially in countries of the Gulf such as Saudi Arabia, noting that after severe human rights violations of two domestic workers, Indonesian government banned Domestic Workers from working in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 3 provides information available on Domestic Workers in Egypt, with the legal, and socio-economic conditions under which this profession operated. From exclusion of the Egyptian Labour Law, social stigma, lack of women's and workers rights to the overall political instability of the country which is many of the times used as an excuse to disregard what is called "sectorial demands". The chapter also intended to show ongoing efforts of civil society organization and how coordination is needed if these efforts are to materialize. This chapter was an introduction to the coming chapter, which to contextualize the findings of the fieldwork conducted by the researcher.

Chapter 4 displays the fieldwork conducted, which included focus group discussions showing the daily struggles faced by Domestic Workers in their work and at their own homes. The focus groups also highlighted important reflections on the interaction with employers, and the researcher was able to link what came out from the focus groups to what the employers said during the interviews conducted with them. This link was analyzed as to acknowledge the point of view of each the Domestic Workers and the employers which then led the analysis to a common point which is the need for regulation of the profession, technical trainings for workers and protective measures for the workers and their employers. On the other hand, the interviews with the gender experts, politicians, development professionals and women's rights activists confirmed the need for collective action by the Domestic Workers and the importance of the role of civil society organizations and international

organizations such as the UN in supporting them to mobilize, build their capacities and coordinate donor funding.

The fieldwork in Cairo, has indeed confirmed what has been revealed in the literature review about the specificities of the profession, which make its workers' needs maybe different from other workers. Operating inside private spaces, feminization of the profession, inability to organize, the different categories of work within it, patriarchal state structures and socio-economic features of the workers have proven to be the main features and obstacles for the regulation of the profession and the realization of Domestic Workers' rights, which both literature review and fieldwork confirmed. Furthermore, the fieldwork revealed more findings that was not part of the literature review as it is Egypt specific, like the marginalization of the informal sector, which Domestic Work is a part of, the unstable political situation which often results in ignoring what is allegedly called "sectorial rights" as well as the reshuffle in cabinet which might affect policy change in many ways. Those Egypt specific features have confirmed further that collective action by Domestic Workers in the strongest and most effective way to achieve their rights and push for the issues on the agenda of policy makers as well as women's rights agenda.

Domestic Workers face many stigma's that affect their personal and professional lives; they are women, poor, unskilled, uneducated, working in the informal sector specifically in a stigmatized profession, and coping with these stigma's makes them more vulnerable to accepting abuses from their employers and society. The need for income generation and the socio-economic background of these workers are the main motives for accepting to work as Domestic Workers. The fact that Domestic Work is seen as the natural role of women, automatically makes paid Domestic Work an extension of that role and thus, neglect of the rights of those who work in it seems easy and



justifiable. So on one hand, Domestic Workers are only doing this job because they have no other choice and on the other hand, social oppression for this job makes interference through regulation inevitable.

Acting as a participant observant, the researcher has seen that Domestic Workers' needs are the basic human rights needs; decent housing, decent quality of life, good education for their children, respect and dignity from society. Although those needs are very basic, they are so far from reach. On the other hand, the researcher has seen that many employers of Domestic Workers speak only of the negative side of Domestic Workers despite the fact that they all acknowledge the difficult lives they live. The researcher was able to get a feel of how the day of the Domestic Worker goes, taking care of two homes theirs and their employer's, humiliation they might experience at the employer's home and within their social network because of what they do, inability to provide their children with a decent quality of life, inability to have compensation in cases of injuries and the fear of the unsecured future. They carry all these burdens everyday and it is normal that many would be careless at performing their jobs, show no commitment, the huge living standards gap between them and their employers will definitely make Domestic Workers do unaccepted social behaviors. All these are problems within the profession, which could be definitely attributed to the deepening poverty in the country, but at the same time if steps are taken in an effective and collaborative manner, things could change. As per the findings, the first step would be organization and collective action by Domestic Workers and the CSOs that supports them.

Collective action is to ensure the creation of a mechanism that will continue the struggle for inclusion of Domestic Workers in state legislation in the way that safeguards their rights and at the same time formalize the working relationship. Collective action will also make Domestic Workers have one voice and common needs, and technical and financial support coming from development

and women's rights organizations are inevitable in making this happen. Building the capabilities of Domestic Workers is investing in a woman, a worker, a mother and a head of household.

In fact the findings showed that formalizing Domestic Work is easier than other professions in the informal sector in Egypt. This is because in Domestic Work, there is an identified employer who can sign a contract and insure the worker, unlike other professions such as street vendors, which do not have an employer and in this case the government is the only other party. Furthermore, regulation of Domestic Workers will not just be mere inclusion in the Labour Law, and this is because this could indeed harm them more. Regulation should be done through a consultative process that takes into account the special features of the profession as well as comply with international standards on decent work and women's rights.

Learning from country experiences is very important; the two country experiences provided earlier in this research have confirmed that full realization of Domestic Workers' rights does not happen over night, it is a process of negotiation, hard work and advocacy. The KUDHEIHA of Kenya has been operating for decades and in the process it was able to gradually win battles of state protection, however, what always proved to be a winning battle, is the empowerment it offered to those Domestic Workers. Year of investing in Domestic Workers and providing them with legal support, investing in research about their conditions would finally pay off for state recognition. The mere fact that developing countries such as Kenya have taken steps to improve the conditions of its Domestic Workers proved that it is possible for Egypt to do so as well. With the large amounts of foreign funding that Egypt receives yearly for development programmes, the strong CSO base that Egypt has, things could indeed change.

In this regard, the findings of this research are as follows:

- Domestic Work is an integral part of economic growth, yet its contribution is invisible

- The invisibility of its contribution lies in the patriarchal economic, legal and social structures that perceived Domestic Work as a non-productive activity that is the natural role of women.
- The assumption that Domestic Work is a non-productive women's role consequently affects how paid Domestic Work is perceived by society and is thus reflected in legislations, social stigma's and the Media.
- Domestic Workers who are pushed into this profession due to their socio-economic background are not satisfied with the conditions of the profession as they are completely outside the state protection. In return, employers of Domestic Workers are not satisfied with the service they receive and this aggravates the negative look for Domestic Workers.
- The Egyptian government has secluded itself out of this struggle by excluding Domestic Workers from its protection and the situation is unchanging.
- Initiatives done throughout the last three years by concerned CSOs made some noise within public debates and shed the light on the huge amount of problems within this profession. Furthermore, the initiatives resulted in the organization of two institutional bodies, an NGO called "Helpers" and a Domestic Workers Union; the bodies still need work to be done to make them stand on their feet mainly to increase the level of coordination and collaboration. Future work should be built of what has been already done and achieved by those initiatives.
- International and local pressure on Egypt especially after the 189 ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers has encouraged the Egyptian government to take some positive steps, however, full state protection is still lacking.
- The process will take time and that is why collective action by Domestic Workers is the solution to ensure suitable mechanisms through which rights of Domestic Workers will be continuously pushed for and advocated for.

- The support of donors and UN entities is crucial to give the first push and provide the needed technical and financial support for Domestic Workers through relevant CSOs.

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Recommendations of this research are thus:

- Collective Action by Domestic Workers through establishment of a solid institutional body
- Legislative Action (Labour Law reform, Unions Law Reform);
- Capacity Building and Technical Training for Domestic Workers;
- Welfare for Domestic workers (Allowing domestic workers to be included in health care and social insurances in an appropriate manner);
- Role of the Media (Changing the stereo types of Domestic Works displayed in visual and written media, and working on changing the negative cultural attitudes towards this profession)
- Activating laws that criminalize Child Labour, as well as Trafficking.

It is important to highlight that there were very interesting topics that the researcher discovered and is recommending it for further research. The first and very important topic is the continuum of the Care Economy and how it's invisibility is the result of many underlying factors that are mainly related to the patriarchal economic and social systems globally. Another is how Collective Action would actually contribute to promoting the visibility of Domestic Workers, Domestic Work and thus the whole Care Economy. Another topic is Women Managing Women and how are the socially constructed gender roles playing a huge role in the dynamics of this relationship. It is possible to consider that when women are assumed a position that are constructed to be men's roles, their attitudes, the social pressures and they way they deal with issues are completely different. The other very important issue is conducting research on the average wages of Domestic Workers across

Egypt, this will not only produce knowledge on this topic for the first time in Egypt, but will also show how much does Domestic Work contribute to the Egyptian economy. The last topic that is seen to be of great importance is the suitable Legislation for Domestic Workers taking into consideration the patriarchal structures that control and shape the laws and policies.

This research is a contribution to fill a huge gap, which exists globally, and in specific in Egypt, there is a lot to be done on improving the visibility of Domestic Workers in the different discourses. This topic is extremely important yet lacks the proper attention, millions of women and their homes are affected by the conditions in which this profession is operating in and making those women's voices heard is an essential and important mission.

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